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THE LIFE OF PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

CHAPTER I.

The arrival of Bysshe was acknowledged by Harriet, but it was plain that he had been superseded; Eliza once or twice betrayed a faint consciousness of his presence, as if the lamp of her life had been faintly glimmering in its socket, which fortunately it was not; that was all the notice she took of her sister's husband. His course, therefore, was plain; his peace might have been assured; whether his happiness would ever have been great, may well be doubted. It was absolutely necessary to declare peremptorily, "Either Eliza goes, or I go;" and instantly to act upon the declaration. This so necessary course the poor fellow did not take; and it is certain that the Divine Poet could

not have taken it, for with super-human strength, weakness less than human was strangely blended; accordingly, from the days of the blessed advent, our destinies were entirely changed. The house lay, as it were, under an interdict; all our accustomed occupations were suspended; study was forbidden; reading was injurious—to read aloud might terminate fatally; to go abroad was death, to stay at home the grave! Bysshe became nothing; I, of course, very much less than nothing—a negative quantity of a very high figure.

Harriet still existed, it was true; but her existence was to be in future a seraphic life, a beatific vision, to be passed exclusively in the assiduous contemplation of Eliza's infinite perfections.

That all this was very well meant, very disinterested, kind, benevolent, sisterly, it would be unjust to deny, or even to doubt; but it was all the more pernicious on that account.

Before the angelic visit, we had never heard of Harriet's nerves, we had never once suspected that such organs existed; now we heard of little else. "Dearest Harriet, you must not do that; think of your nerves; only consider, dearest, the state of your nerves; Harriet, dear, you must not eat this; you are not going to drink that, surely; whatever will become of your poor nerves? Gracious heaven! What would Miss Warne say?"

Miss Warne was the highest sanction; her name was often invoked, and her judgment appealed to. "What will Miss Warne say?" That single, simple, but momentous question set every other question at rest.

Who was Miss Warne? I inquired of the now nervous Harriet. She informed me, that she stood in the same relation to some coffee-house or hotel in London, as the lovely Eliza; she was a daughter of the house; a mature virgin also, quite ripe, perhaps rather too mellow; a prim old maid indeed, an old frump, she said; there was nothing particular about her in any way; but Eliza had the highest opinion of Miss Warne; she had been long her bosom friend!

Eliza was vigilant, keeping a sharp look-out after the nerves; yet was she frequently off duty; her time was chiefly spent in her bed-room. What does that dear Eliza do alone in her bed-room? Does she read? No.—Does she work? Never.—Does she write? No.—What does she do, then?

Harriet came quite close to me, and answered in a whisper, lest peradventure her sister should hear her, with the serious air of one who communicates some profound and weighty secret, "She brushes her hair!" The coarse black hair was glossy, no doubt; but to give daily sixteen hours out of four-and-twenty to it, was certainly to bestow much time

on a crop. Yet it was by no means impossible, that whilst she plied her hair-brush, she was revolving in her mind dearest Harriet's best interests; or seriously reflecting upon what Miss Warne would say.

The poor Poet was overwhelmed by the affectionate invasion; he lay prostrated and helpless, under the insupportable pressure of our domiciliary visit; but the good Harriet knew how, school-girl like, and contrary to her sisterly allegiance, sometimes to take advantage, by stealth, of dear Eliza's absence. "Come quite close to me, and I will read to you. I must not speak loud, lest I should disturb poor Eliza."

Sometimes she could escape for a short walk before dinner. One day, whilst the guardian angel kept on brushing, we brushed off, and wandered to the river. We stood on the high centre of the old Roman bridge; there was a mighty flood; father Ouse had overflowed his banks, carrying away with him timber and what not.

"Is it not an interesting, a surprising sight?"

"Yes, it is very wonderful. But, dear Harriet, how nicely that dearest Eliza would spin down the river! How sweetly she would turn round and round, like that log of wood! And, gracious heaven, what would Miss Warne say?"

She turned her pretty face away, and laughed—

as a slave laughs, who is beginning to grow weary of an intolerable yoke.

In York, an old English city, Harriet's beauty attracted the eyes of all beholders, in walking through its narrow streets; her cheeks were suffused with the blush of modesty, which made her still more engaging, more bright and radiant; and then the good girl bashfully drew down her veil. Her charms did not appear to be equally captivating in the Northern metropolis: I went abroad with her there more frequently, but nobody ever noticed her; she was short, and slightly and delicately formed; not raw-boned enough for the Scottish market.

When I first knew Shelley, he was alike indifferent to all works of art. He learned afterwards to admire statues, and then, at a still later period, pictures; but he never had any feeling for the wonders of architecture; even our majestic cathedrals were viewed with indifference. I took him into York Minster several times, but to no purpose; it was thrown away, entirely lost upon him. The insensible Harriet appeared to feel its beauty, until her admiration of the sublime structure was proscribed and forbidden by authority.

One day, when we were going together to the Minster, Eliza intervened, and instead of interdicting our walk, to our surprise said, that she would

go with us, and inflicted upon us her comfortless company. She had heard of the celebrated window at the end of the north transept, called "The Five Sisters," because five ladies had given it to the church: the stained glass in each of the five bays had been copied from a pattern in needlework embroidered by one of the five lady sisters. On entering the Minster, she at once inquired for "The Five Sisters;" the window was pointed out to her. "Lord! What stiff, ugly, old-fashioned, formal patterns! Gracious heaven! What would Miss Warne say? Harriet!" After this solemn censure and condemnation, inasmuch as the two irrefragable tapsters disapproved of the tapestry, as being ill suited for an urn-rug, the docile and obedient Harriet dutifully forbore to admire the glorious edifice.

"What is your opinion of suicide? Did you never think of destroying yourself?" It was a puzzling question indeed, for the thought had never entered my head.

"What do you think of matricide; of high treason; of rick-burning? Did you never think of killing any one; of murdering your mother; of setting stack-yards on fire?" I had never contemplated the commission of any of these crimes, and I should scarcely have been more astonished if I had been interrogated concerning my dispositions and

inclinations with respect to them, than I was when, early in our acquaintance, the good Harriet asked me, "What do you think of suicide?"

She often discoursed of her purpose of killing herself some day or other, and at great length, in a calm, resolute manner. She told me that at school, where she was very unhappy, as she said, but I could never discover why she was so, for she was treated with much kindness and exceedingly well instructed, she had conceived and contrived sundry attempts and purposes of destroying herself. It is possible that her sister had assured her that she was very unhappy, and had supported the assurance by the incontrovertible opinion of Miss Warne, and of course Harriet became firmly convinced of her utter wretchedness. She got up in the night, she said, sometimes with a fixed intention of making away with herself—in what manner she did not unfold—and bade a long farewell to the world, looked out of the window, taking leave of the bright moon and of all sublunary things, and then, it should seem, got into bed again and went quietly to sleep, and rose in the morning and wrote neatly upon her slate, in the school-room at Clapham, the admirable ordinances of Idomeneus and Numa Pompilius as sedately as before.

She spoke of self-murder serenely before strangers; and at a dinner party I have heard her

describe her feelings, opinions, and intentions with respect to suicide with prolix earnestness; and she looked so calm, so tranquil, so blooming, and so handsome, that the astonished guests smiled. She once, in particular—I well remember the strange scene and the astonishment of the harmless company—at a Pythagorean dinner in the house of a medical philosopher, scattered dismay amongst a quiet party of vegetable-eaters, persons who would not slay a shrimp, or extinguish animal life in embryo by eating an egg, by asking, whether they did not feel sometimes strongly inclined to kill themselves.

The poor girl's monomania of self-destruction, which we long looked upon as a vain fancy, a baseless delusion, an inconsequent hallucination of the mind, amused us occasionally for some years; eventually it proved a sad reality, and drew forth many bitter tears.

We have sometimes consoled ourselves by cherishing the belief, that if none of those contingencies had happened, to the influence of which a rash act has, with mistaken confidence, been ascribed, the morbid predisposition might have produced the same melancholy result. But he who anticipates ill discharges the duty of a faithful biographer.

When Bysshe returned from London we changed our lodgings, perhaps somewhat hastily, under the impulse of the same impatience which had presided

at taking them; for throughout the whole course of his perturbed and restless life, the poor Poet was uniformly in a hurry; his life indeed was one hurry; he appeared to be ever impelled by a wild terror, lest he should lose, or even delay for one moment, any opportunity of placing himself in a disadvantageous position. Accordingly we removed, but with little benefit, with scarcely any visible improvement; however, we quitted the Valkyriæ, two of the Fatal Sisters; dressmakers not unworthy of a place in the Edda, who were manifestly designed to sew shrouds, to hem winding-sheets, to make mouldering dresses for the mouldering dead.

Nevertheless, York was in those days, in many respects at least, a poor, poverty-stricken city, rich only in pride, ecclesiastical and civil, and it was not easy to find good lodgings there: during a year's residence I shifted my quarters more than once, but I was never at all comfortable, save with the most Christian woman with whom I was at first located.

I had spoken sometimes of my intention of paying a visit to the English lakes, which visit had been exchanged for the matrimonial trip to Edinburgh. The image of lakes, mountains, rocks, and waterfalls, and of the like picturesque and romantic objects which those districts present, at once took entire possession of light minds. The young couple

became in an instant, as to their whole souls, demoniacally possessed by the Genius of the Lakes; and it was impossible to exorcise them, to cast out the mischievous spirit, either by prayer or fasting, or in any other manner—not even by bell, book, and candle; more especially since their Guardian Angel, smirking in silence, no doubt, favoured the sudden fancy.

Nothing would please but an immediate journey to Keswick; and our flight must be in the winter: I was requested, strongly urged, to join in it. To quit my professional duties, in which I had engaged, was impossible; besides, the impracticable month of November was ill suited for such an excursion. Next summer, during the long vacation, I should have leisure: it would be the most proper season for tourists, and we would all go together.

To a poetic temperament, so long a delay was intolerable; the young Poet's imagination could conceive anything in earth or in heaven, but not the possibility of waiting for several months before seeing some mountain stream; of living at peace with himself and all mankind, in great personal comfort for whole weeks, without having as yet heard by moonlight the sound of a remote waterfall. Neither could they be brought to comprehend that one period of the year was better adapted than another for their cherished purposes. Skiddaw was

there surely, and Helvellyn; Derwentwater Lake was always there; what more could they require? Moreover, Southey and Wordsworth, not less than the donkeys which they had so finely apostrophised and so sweetly sung, remain there all the year; and why cannot we? On the shortest day, as well as the longest, although for a shorter time, the parish pauper, Harry Gill, the theme of many sounding verse, wakes the echoes by cracking stones with his pick in some sequestered mountain glen, without respecting seasons or persons, except perchance the parish beadle; and we are more than many paupers! To go at once to Keswick; to go to Keswick instantly, and to remain there "for ever," was practicable and necessary. "You will soon be sensible of the absurdity, the wickedness, of lingering longer in a spot so unpoetic and uninspiring as York; you will speedily re-unite yourself with your friends at Keswick, and remain with them there 'for ever.'"

A day was fixed for their departure; their trunks were packed; they would take a part of their baggage, the rest was to be left behind for me to bring, when I came after them: I gave no hopes that I would soon follow, but they kmew better than I did; and they were confident I should not tarry. Harriet's nerves, it was added, would be braced by the pure mountain air; the fisc was rather empty,

but the funds required for an expensive journey were supplied, I apprehend, by Eliza, who, although she had a laughable way of showing it, appeared to feel a lively interest in her sister's welfare, and in the prosperity of her nervous system, according to her own view of it, and in which, notwithstanding the appearance of rude health, there might, in truth, be something peculiar.

To be always in a hurry was Bysshe's grand and first rule of conduct; his second canon of practical wisdom, and this he esteemed hardly less important than the former, was to make a mystery of everything; to treat as a profound secret matters manifest, patent, and fully known to everybody. A lively fancy, which imagined difficulties, and created obstacles where none existed, was the true cause of a course of dealing that was troublesome and injurious to himself and to all connected with him.

"How many great poets, like yourself," I have asked him, "could the world bear to have in it at once, without being altogether ruined; how many of you—three or four—might co-exist in the universe, and yet not induce a rapid and utter annihilation of all things?"

The morning of departure had been fixed; on the afternoon preceding it, when I returned to dinner, such was the precipitation of the young votaries of the Muses, that the birds were flown; a short,

illegible, unintelligible note, scrawled with a pencil on a scrap of paper, informed me, so far as I could make it out, that it had occurred to them during my absence at Chambers, that it would be expedient to start at once, and to proceed to Richmond, where they should pass the night, and if I chose to follow them, I should find them there, and we would travel the next morning all together towards the goal, Keswick.

This proposal it was alike my duty and my inclination to decline; whenever circumstances brought us together again, I should enjoy once more the society of my incomparable friend; and should they continue until the summer to inhabit the shores of Derwentwater lake, it would be easy and agreeable to visit them.

My materials for composing a connected narrative of the proceedings of my friends during their stay at Keswick, which did not last for ever, as they had projected, but only for a few weeks or months, are scanty. I have eight letters, not one of which is dated, either by the writer, or by a post-mark: in those days, unless a letter passed through London, and came into the General Post Office, the stamp bears no date, merely the name of the post town. These give little information respecting their external world, their creature comforts, or discomforts; as to their internal life, it must have been truly distressing,

on account of ill-health and low spirits, caused chiefly by fatigue, inclement weather, incommodious abodes, and the want of all needful appliances and resources, especially of money. The purse of their Guardian Angel, it seems, was just long enough to enable her fairly to plant her wards, but not to furnish permanent succour.

"If you dislike York, and the neighbourhood of York, so much, do not remain there; quit it at once; but go to the South, to a part of the world with which you are acquainted, and where you are known; to a milder and more genial climate, and where you will be nearer your supplies. Do not on any account expose yourselves to the bleak North at this unkindly season, out of the way of everybody and of everything,—out of the reach of money, and buried alive amongst rude and uncivilised barbarians." But counsel was offered in vain; the Muses are not to be advised: we shall see Derwentwater Lake, into which the cascade of Lodore falls, and that will suffice; it will be all in all.

They had several residences, one more disagreeable than the other, in the town of Keswick; and one at a place called Chesnut Cottage, at some little distance from the town, which, it may be supposed, had its additional and peculiar inconveniences.

Bysshe's letters will speak for themselves, in a tone of vague and mysterious despondency.

KESWICK, *Wednesday night.*

YOU were surprised at our sudden departure; I have no time, however, *now*, either to account for it or enter into the investigation which we agreed upon. I have arrived at this place after some days of incessant travelling, which has left me no leisure to write to you at length. To-morrow you will hear more.

With real, true interest, I constantly think of you, believe me, my friend, so sincerely am I attached to you. I can never forget you.

Yours, Percy S.

Will you send my box per coach to Mr. D. Crosthwaite's, Town Head, Keswick, Cumberland.

To T. J. H., York.

POST OFFICE, KESWICK, CUMBERLAND; not Mr. D. Crosthwaite's.

I PROMISED to write to you to-day, my dear friend, but again another day has elapsed in the occupation of preparing our residence, and night has come on, when the post leaves us.

We all greatly regret that "your own interests, your own *real* interests," should compel you to remain at present at York. But pray, write often; your last letter I have read, as I would read your soul.

We remain at Keswick. We settle here, at least for some time. I will never go to the South again. Adieu.

Yours most affectionately, most unalterably,

PERCY SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., York.

KESWICK, CUMBERLAND.

YOUR letters are arrived. You did right in anticipating that Richmond was only a resting-place, and *Keswick* is our residence, to which place I wish you could follow us immediately.

I stand alone. I feel that I am nothing: a speck in an universe!

All this is true: yet have I not been wretched, and was my wretchedness less keen, because it was undeserved? *Was* it undeserved? What is desert? Are you not he whom I love, whom I deem capable of exciting the emulation, and attracting the admiration of thousands. I have ever esteemed you as a superior being, and taken you for one who was to give laws to us poor beings, who grovel beneath. We shall meet again soon; but I must live some little time, I fear, by myself; and if my firmness is not sufficient to bear pain without hope of reward, I know that soon we meet again.

Your letters are kind and sincere. I had no time when I wrote last. If I thought we were to be long parted, I should be wretchedly miserable,—half

mad! I look on Harriet: she is before me; she is somewhat better. Has she convinced you that she is?

Oh! what a spot is this! Here nature has exhausted the profusion of her loveliness! Will *you* come; will you share my fortunes, enter into my schemes, love me as I love you, be inseparable, as once I fondly hoped we were?

This is not all past, like a dream of the sick man, which leaves but bitterness,—a fleeting vision. Oh! how I have loved you! I was even ashamed to tell you how!

And now to leave you for a long time! No; not for a *long* time! Night comes; Death comes! Cold, calm Death. Almost I would it were to-morrow. There is another life;—are you not to be the first there? Assuredly, dearest, dearest friend. Reason with me still; I am like a child in weakness.

Your letters came directly after dinner;—how could any one read them unmoved? Calm, wise; you are then with me, and I forbear wishing that Death would yawn.—Adieu!

Cannot you follow us?—why not? But I will dare to be good,—dare to be virtuous; and I will soon seize once more what I have for a while relinquished, never, never again to resign it.

To T. J. H., York.

KESWICK.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have just finished reading your long letter to Harriet. It is late, or the post is so; therefore I may not say all I wish; indeed, that is *not* possible: words cannot express half my reasonings, the thousandth part of my feelings. Can I not feel; do we not sympathise? Cannot I read your soul, as I have read your letter, which I believe I have generally considered to be a copy of the former. My letters have always been, as well as my conversations with you, transcripts of my thoughts.

I did not concert my departure from Richmond, nor that from York. Why did I leave you? I have never doubted you,—you, the brother of my soul, the object of my vivid interest; the theme of my impassioned panegyric. But, for the present, Adieu!

It is nine; it is ten. Expect to hear to-morrow. I will then answer your letter.

Ever your Friend,

PERCY SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., York.

CHESNUT HILL, KESWICK.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

What you say of *my* superiority is perfectly erroneous. Consider a little, and you will discover

this. The great apparent cause of it is my insensibility; perhaps you are not prepared to boast of yours: I am sure you are not.

If Harriet's state of health did not intervene between our meeting again immediately, to-morrow willingly would I return to York; aye, willingly, and be happy thus to prove and to indulge my friendship.

"Absence extinguishes small passions, and kindles great ones." It is so in love, and so it is with friendship.

My friend, you say I ought always to set you an example of firmness. What! I, the weakest, the most slavish of beings that crawl on the earth's face, to you?

This is a sweet spot! But, oh heavens, my soul is half sick at this terrible world, where nature seems to own no monster in her works, but man. They quarrel for straws; they part on these quarrels; and two lovers, whose existences seemed entwined, separate because —— you can complete the portraiture yourself from my history.

Harriet has written to you; what she has said, I know not. I have not been able to write for a day or two to you, owing to having been ill from the poison of laurel leaves;—I have now.

Your letters of to-day have arrived; I have read that to Harriet; she showed it me. I know how

much I owe you; I feel it all. Believe me, your letter has delighted and affected me. I will write again to-morrow.

Your real, true, sincere Friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Will you send us Mr. S.'s bill?

To T. J. H., York.

CHESNUT COTTAGE, CUMBERLAND.

WE returned to Keswick last night. All your letters I have found here, which have arrived in my absence. To think of returning again to York at present is *impossible*. I could not consent to the injury of Harriet's health,—to the destruction of her nerves. You must know what you yourself are. Mock modesty can never have concealed from you the fascination which your society spreads. It were impossible to think of the friendship of such a being, and not to say that were worthier of attainment than fame, or pleasure, or the attachment of all other beings. To give up this, even for a few weeks, must be a sacrifice,—how great an one my heart alone can testify. Yet this I now resign for a while. I resign it for Harriet's health; possibly for my own (though *I* think not). I need only tranquillity.

If I were free, I were unceasingly yours, though I do not think you infallible. I think you capable of great things, and in such, as well as in the stores

of such a mind as yours, can I conceive no pleasure equal to the participation.

I returned to Keswick yesterday. Your letters in the mean time were *not* forwarded to me.

Our stay here is *so* uncertain, that I know not one day where we may be the next.

Your real Friend,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., York.

KESWICK.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Our letters are delayed terribly;—two of yours together! The thing is, we are not *in*, but near, Keswick. You will hear from me to-morrow.

I do not know that absence will *certainly* cure love; but this I know, that it fearfully augments the intensity of friendship!

I do not know where the passage exists of which you speak in the latter part of your letter. But this will not do; I must look for it.

Believe me yours, till you hear again.

I write in Keswick, just as the post is going out.

Your true, sincere

P. B. SHELLEY.

Pray, take care of your friend.

To T. J. H., York.

KESWICK, *Thursday.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We live now at Keswick. You do not come to us; but pray, write. You may send my trunk. Open all my letters that come to York.

I have obeyed what you say in your letter of to-day: I have not told you that I am miserable; indeed I cannot be so miserable as I was when I wrote those letters. If you were to see me now, you would see me very calm; as I am sure you are. Your long letter of advice has been my companion, my study, since I received it.

Adieu! Be happy! My dear friend, adieu!

Ever yours, with sincerity,

PERCY SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., York.

Other and longer letters were written to me from Keswick by Harriet, as well as by Bysshe, containing, doubtless, some details of their mode of life, and probably of their studies also, when they had become sufficiently reconciled to their delightfully romantic position to find solace in study,—and indited most probably in a clearer, calmer, and less perturbed spirit. These, unfortunately, I never received; why I know not. I can only conjecture that, possibly, when they resided out of the town the letter, which would have been so welcome at

York, was confided to some artless, simple-souled messenger,—to some Peter Bell, or other immortal hero of Lakist minstrelsy, in order to be put by him into the letter-box at Keswick, whither he was enjoined to hasten, through the pouring rain, and that a shilling was given as a reward for his faithful service. That the single-hearted Peter habitually repaired to the nearest public-house, spent his shilling in an agreeable manner, and then, to make himself thoroughly comfortable, quietly lighted his pipe with the voluminous epistle, the pretty Harriet's pretty phrases imparting a more delicate flavour to the bird's-eye.

My instructions with regard to Shelley's correspondence were, to open all letters that should come to York for him, and to dispatch such only as appeared to me worth the postage. Many letters arrived daily, but few of them merited to be sent farther. One of the few was an invitation, kindly and cordially worded, from the Duke of Norfolk, to visit him at Graystoke: it was franked by his Grace, and dated November 7th, 1811. The letter was transmitted to Keswick, and the visit was paid. I was informed subsequently that it gave much satisfaction to all three of them, more especially to the ladies: and Harriet assured me, most probably on the authority of her sister, that the Duke was quite charmed with Eliza; and, if

his Grace admired black hair well brushed, it could hardly have been otherwise. In what terms or in what manner his declaration was made, I was not told. Unfortunately, the noble admirer was married already, although only to an insane Scudamore, yet still married; otherwise it might have been inferred that the charming Eliza would have been a Duchess; and then, gracious heaven! what would Miss Warne have said?

How Bysshe made the acquaintance of Southey, whether by personal or epistolary introduction, or through poetic sympathy, I never knew.

Concerning the intercourse of these two remarkable persons, I have heard from Shelley, and from others, several anecdotes.

"Southey had a large collection of books, very many of them old books, some rare works,—books in many languages, more particularly in Spanish. The shelves extended over the walls of every room in his large, dismal house in Keswick; they were in the bed-rooms, and even down the stairs. This I never saw elsewhere. I took out some volume one day, as I was going down stairs with him. Southey looked at me, as if he was displeased, so I put it back again instantly, and I never ventured to take down one of his books another time. I used to glance my eye eagerly over the backs of the books, and read their titles, as I went up or down stairs.

I could not help doing so, but I think he did not quite approve of it."

"Do you know that Southey did not like to have his books touched. Do you know why?"

"No! I do not know."

"You do not know? How I hate that there should be any thing which you do not know! For who will tell me if you will not?"

"I only know that persons who have large libraries sometimes have the same feeling."

"How strange that a man should have many thousands of books, and should have a secret in every book, which he cannot bear that anybody should know but himself. How rare and grim! Do you believe, then, that Southey really had a secret in every one of his books?"

"No! I do not, indeed, Bysshe."

After musing for some minutes, he added: "There were not secrets in all his books, certainly, for he often took one down himself and showed me some remarkable passage; and then he would let me keep it as long as I pleased, and turn over the leaves, if he had taken it down himself; so there could be no secret there. And yet," he continued, after further reflection, "perhaps there was a secret; but he thought that I could not find it out."

"Were the passages which he showed you really remarkable?"

"They might be, sometimes; but for the most part they were not; at least, I did not think them so. They usually appeared trifling. He never discussed any subject; he gave his own opinion, commonly, in a very absolute manner; he used to lay down the law, to dogmatise. What he said was seldom his own,—it seldom came from himself. He repeated long quotations, read extracts which he had made, or took down books and read from them aloud, or pointed out something for me to read, which would settle the matter at once without appeal. His conversation was rather interesting, and only moderately instructive; he was not so much a man as a living common-place book, a talking album filled with long extracts from long-forgotten authors on unimportant subjects. Still his intercourse was very agreeable. I liked much to be with him; besides, he was a good man and exceedingly kind."

When Southey died his books were brought to the hammer—as the phrase is. I picked up a few of them, rather as memorials than for their intrinsic value. Several of these were bound in the Chinese fashion, as I had heard that many of his books were, that is to say, in silk, cloth, velvet, and not in leather.

Mrs. Southey had been a milliner at Bath, a certain Miss ——; a lovely creature, as I have been told, as every Bath milliner ought to be; and no

doubt a very estimable person. After her marriage she used up her remnants in a truly conjugal and most beneficial manner, in binding strongly and very neatly such of her husband's books as required it. I possess one of these bound with a bit of modest gingham, and another in a pretty piece of Irish poplin; both volumes are likewise adorned by the autograph of the author of Madoc; they are therefore, on all accounts, to be cherished.

In associating with Southey, not only was it necessary to salvation to refrain from touching his books, but various rites, ceremonies, and usages must be rigidly observed. At certain appointed hours only was he open to conversation; at the seasons which had been predestined from all eternity for holding intercourse with his friends. Every hour of the day had its commission—every half-hour was assigned to its own peculiar, undeviating function. The indefatigable student gave a detailed account of his most painstaking life, every moment of which was fully employed and strictly pre-arranged, to a certain literary Quaker lady.

"I rise at five throughout the year; from six till eight I read Spanish; then French, for one hour; Portuguese, next, for half an hour,—my watch lying on the table; I give two hours to poetry; I write prose for two hours; I translate so long; I make extracts so long;" and so of the rest, until

the poor fellow had fairly fagged himself into his bed again.

"And, pray, when dost thou think, friend?" she asked, drily, to the great discomfiture of the future Laureate.

From morn till night, from the cradle to the grave, the hard reading, hard writing pansophist had never once found a single spare moment for such a purpose. The fable, if it be a fable, is told of thee, too, dearest Bysshe. Shelley also was always reading; at his meals a book lay by his side, on the table, open. Tea and toast were often neglected, his author seldom; his mutton and potatoes might grow cold; his interest in a work never cooled. He invariably sallied forth, book in hand, reading to himself, if he was alone, if he had a companion reading aloud.. He took a volume to bed with him, and read as long as his candle lasted; he then slept —impatiently, no doubt—until it was light, and he recommenced reading at the early dawn. One day we were walking together, arm-in-arm, under the gate of the Middle Temple, in Fleet Street; Shelley, with open book, was reading aloud; a man with an apron said to a brother operative, "See, there are two of your damnation lawyers; they are always reading!" The tolerant philosopher did not choose to be reminded that he had once been taken for a lawyer; he declared the fellow was an ignorant

wretch! He was loth to leave his book to go to bed, and frequently sat up late reading; sometimes indeed he remained at his studies all night. In consequence of this great watching, and of almost incessant reading, he would often fall asleep in the day-time—dropping off in a moment—like an infant. He often quietly transferred himself from his chair to the floor, and slept soundly on the carpet, and in the winter upon the rug, basking in the warmth like a cat; and like a cat his little round head was roasted before a blazing fire. If any one humanely covered the poor head to shield it from the heat, the covering was impatiently put aside in his sleep.'' "You make your brains boil, Bysshe. I have seen and heard the steam rushing out violently at your nostrils and ears!"

Southey was addicted to reading his terrible epics —before they were printed—to any one who seemed to be a fit subject for the cruel experiment. He soon set his eyes on the new comer, and one day having effected the caption of Shelley, he immediately lodged him securely in a little study up-stairs, carefully locking the door upon himself and his prisoner and putting the key in his waistcoat-pocket. There was a window in the room, it is true, but it was so high above the ground that Baron Trenck himself would not have attempted it. "Now you shall be delighted," Southey said; "but sit down." Poor

Bysshe sighed, and took his seat at the table. The author seated himself opposite, and placing his MS. on the table before him, began to read slowly and distinctly. The poem, if I mistake not, was "The Curse of Kehamah." Charmed with his own composition the admiring author read on, varying his voice occasionally, to point out the finer passages and invite applause. There was no commendation; no criticism; all was hushed. This was strange. Southey raised his eyes from the neatly-written MS.; Shelley had disappeared. This was still more strange. Escape was impossible; every precaution had been taken, yet he had vanished. Shelley had glided noiselessly from his chair to the floor, and the insensible young Vandal lay buried in profound sleep underneath the table. No wonder the indignant and injured bard afterwards inrolled the sleeper as a member of the Satanic school, and inscribed his name, together with that of Byron, on a gibbet! I have been told on his own authority, that wherever Southey passed the night in travelling, he bought some book, if it were possible to pick one up on a stall, or in a shop, and wrote his own name and the name of the place at the bottom of the title-page, and the date, including the day of the week. This inscription, he found, served in some measure the purpose of a journal, for when he looked at such a date it reminded him, through the association of

ideas, of many particulars of his journey. I have a small volume in the German language, thus inscribed by Southey, at the foot of the title-page; the place is some town in France.

Bysshe chanced to call, one afternoon, during his residence at Keswick, on his new acquaintance, a man eminent, and of rare epic fertility. It was at four o'clock; Southey and his wife were sitting together at their tea after an early dinner, for it was washing-day. A cup of tea was offered, which was accepted, and a plate piled high with tea-cakes was handed to the illustrious visitor; of these he refused to partake, with signs of strong aversion. He was always abstemious in his diet, at this period of his life peculiarly so; a thick hunch of dry bread, possibly a slice of brown bread and butter, might have been welcome to the Spartan youth; but hot tea-cakes heaped up, in scandalous profusion, well buttered, blushing with currants or sprinkled thickly with carraway-seeds, and reeking with allspice, shocked him grievously. It was a Persian apparatus, which he detested,—a display of excessive and unmanly luxury by which the most powerful empires have been overthrown,—that threatened destruction to all social order, and would have rendered abortive even the divine Plato's scheme of a frugal and perfect republic. A poet's dinner is never a very heavy meal; on a washing-day, we may

readily believe, that it is as light as his own fancy. So far in the day Southey, no doubt, had fared sparingly; he was a hale, healthy, hearty man, breathing the keen mountain air, and working hard, too hard, poor fellow; he was hungry, and did not shrink from the tea-cakes which had been furnished to make up for his scanty mid-day repast. Shelley watched his unworthy proceedings, eyeing him with pain and pity. Southey had not noticed his distress, but he held his way, clearing the plates of buttered currant-cakes, and buttered seed-cakes, with an equal relish.

"Why! good God, Southey!" Bysshe suddenly exclaimed, for he could no longer contain his boiling indignation, "I am ashamed of you! It is awful, horrible, to see such a man as you are greedily devouring this nasty stuff!"

"Nasty stuff, indeed! How dare you call my tea-cakes nasty stuff, sir?"

Mrs. Southey was charming, but it is credibly reported that she was also rather sharp.

"Nasty stuff! What right have you, pray, Mr. Shelley, to come into my house, and to tell me to my face that my tea-cakes, which I made myself, are nasty; and to blame my husband for eating them? How in the world can they be nasty? I washed my hands well before I made them, and I sprinkled them with flour. The board and the rolling-pin

were quite clean; they had been well scraped and sprinkled with flour. The flour was taken out of the meal-tub, which is always kept locked; here is the key! There was nothing nasty in the ingredients, I am sure; we have a very good grocer in Keswick. Do you suppose, that I would put anything nasty into them? What right have you to call them nasty; you ought to be ashamed of yourself, and not Mr. Southey; he surely has a right to eat what his wife puts before him! Nasty stuff! I like your impertinence!"

In the course of this animated invective, Bysshe put his face close to the plate, and curiously scanned the cakes. He then took up a piece and ventured to taste it, and, finding it very good, he began to eat as greedily as Southey himself. The servant, a neat, stout, little, ruddy Cumberland girl, with a very white apron, brought in a fresh supply, these also the brother philosophers soon dispatched, eating one against the other in generous rivality. Shelley then asked for more, but no more were to be had; the whole batch had been consumed. The lovely Edith was pacified on seeing that her cakes were relished by the two hungry poets, and she expressed her regret that she did not know that Mr. Shelley was coming to take tea with her, or she would have made a larger provision. Harriet, who told me the tale, added; "We were to have hot tea-

cakes every evening 'for ever.' I was to make them myself, and Mrs. Southey was to teach me."

The Divine Poet, like many other wiser men, used to pass very readily and suddenly from one extreme to the other. I myself witnessed, some years later, a like rapid transition. When he resided at Bishopsgate, I usually walked down from London, and spent Sunday with him. One frosty Saturday, in the middle of the winter, being overcome by hunger, I halted by the way—it was a rare occurrence—for refreshment, at a humble inn on Hounslow Heath. I had just taken my seat on a Windsor chair, at a small round beechen table in a little dark room with a well-sanded floor, when I saw Bysshe striding past the window. He was coming to meet me; I went to the door, and hailed him.

"Come along! It is dusk; tea will be ready; we shall be late!"

"No! I must have something to eat first; come in!"

He walked about the room impatiently.

"When will your dinner be ready; what have you ordered?"

"I asked for eggs and bacon, but they have no eggs; I am to have some fried bacon."

He was struck with horror, and his agony was increased at the appearance of my dinner. Bacon

was proscribed by him; it was gross and abominable. It distressed him greatly at first to see me eat the bacon; but he gradually approached the dish, and, studying the bacon attentively, said, "So this is bacon!" He then ate a small piece. "It is not so bad either!" More was ordered; he devoured it voraciously.

"Bring more bacon!" It was brought, and eaten.

"Let us have another plate."

"I am very sorry, gentlemen," said the old woman, "but indeed I have no more in the house."

The Poet was angry at the disappointment, and rated her.

"What business has a woman to keep an inn, who has not enough bacon in the house for her guests? She ought to be killed!"

"Really, gentlemen, I am very sorry to be out of bacon; but I only keep by me as much as I think will be wanted. I can easily get more from Staines; they have very good bacon always in Staines!"

"As there is nothing more to be had, come along, Bysshe; let us go home to tea!"

"No! Not yet; she is going to Staines, to get us some more bacon."

"She cannot go to-night; come along!"

He departed with reluctance, grumbling as we walked homewards at the scanty store of bacon, lately condemned as gross and abominable. The

dainty rustic food made a strong impression upon his lively fancy, for when we arrived the first words he uttered were, "We have been eating bacon together on Hounslow Heath, and do you know it was very nice. Cannot we have bacon here, Mary?"

"Yes, you can, if you please; but not to-night. Here is your tea; take that!"

"I had rather have some more bacon!" sighed the Poet.

Shelley's family always called him Bysshe; as many of them, as now survive, whenever they speak of their bereavement—of the bright, but lost star of their honourable house—still call him so. Harriet and her sister, chiefly the latter, soon interdicted that name, which Eliza affirmed was too shocking; and they substituted Percy, as being prettier and more romantic. It may be so, but it was less peculiar; and I continued to address my friend as Bysshe, whenever I could style him thus without flagrant offence and open scandal. There is a Percy in Chevy Chace; a Percy in Shakspeare; there is many a Percy to be found elsewhere; good men and true; it is a very good name, no doubt; but I never knew any other Bysshe; there is an individuality in that name which pleases me. His grandfather, old Sir Bysshe, after whom he was called, and who probably was his godfather, I never saw; by general consent it was admitted that he

was tall, handsome, clever, and eccentric; of a noble presence and good address, and with the formal politeness of a gentleman of the old school.

Sir Bysshe Shelley was born in 1731; he was a younger branch of his family, and therefore not wealthy. I have heard various tales concerning him, some of them extraordinary; these, it would seem, are partly true, and partly false, as is commonly the case with all private histories; but none of them are entirely unfounded. I have heard, for example, that he was at one time a miller. The legend has been thus explained. He was always frugal, and he saved his money early in life; he had invested his first savings on the security of a mill, and the mortgage being foreclosed, he became the owner of the mill; so far, but not farther, he was a miller. He married a rich heiress, when he was only twenty-one years of age, in 1752, the only daughter of the Rev. Theobald Mitchell. This lady was the mother of Timothy Shelley, and the grandmother of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Some seventeen years afterwards he found another and a richer heiress, whom he married in 1769; of his second marriage it would be superfluous to say more at present.

His personal habits were economical, even penurious, and he had married two rich wives; it is not surprising, therefore, that at the termination of a

long life of eighty-four years, he had amassed a considerable sum of money, and died at the commencement of the year 1815 very rich. Nevertheless he had spent money, it is said, at elections; and it is certain that he had lavished large sums very foolishly in building a vast edifice, Castle Goring, which he never completed. The whimsical and parsimonious old gentleman was created a Baronet in 1806. His habits were retired and peculiar, but little known; for many years before his death he was confined by ill health, or chose to confine himself, to his room in a small house in the town of Horsham, and to the society of an old servant, who was as great a curiosity as his master; as the fine, handsome man, of polished and elegant manners, of great natural talents, and of vast wealth, who by his own caprice was thus buried alive.

I have heard that at one time Sir Bysshe actually practised medicine in London, in partnership with Dr. Graham, who was formerly notorious for his earth-baths and celestial beds. This tale is apocryphal; but Bysshe, his grandson and namesake, assured me that he had heard from good authority that his grandfather lent money to the doctor, with whom he was acquainted, in order to set up a purple chariot, in which the renowned physician drove about town; and to carry on other professional objects. When I was a boy, people still

talked about Dr. Graham; I remember hearing a clergyman, a middle-aged man, give a detailed account of him to ladies and gentlemen assembled in the drawing-room at home:—

"My uncle, an old clergyman, had lived many years in a damp parsonage in the New Forest, and he was sorely afflicted with rheumatism. He was advised to consult Dr. Graham, who was then all the fashion. He did so, and was persuaded by him to take an earth-bath: he actually took one, and he thought it did him good, and was likely to be of great service. My uncle often regretted that he had not resolution enough to persevere; but it was exceedingly unpleasant. The patient was led into the doctor's garden, there he took off his clothes behind a screen, stripping himself stark naked. He was then placed in a hole in the ground, just large enough to contain him; in what posture, I do not recollect, but I think standing. Earth, finely sifted vegetable mould, was gently filled in quite up to the collar bone, the head and neck being free, and remaining out of the ground; the arms were buried, being placed close to his side. The patient being fairly in the bath, the screen was removed, and he commonly saw other persons around him in a like situation with himself; and he passed the time, as well as he could, in conversing with them; for it was necessary to remain three or four hours in the earth."

"How cold he must have been!" a lady remarked.

"On the contrary, the sensation of heat was most oppressive; there was an unpleasant feeling of suffocation, and the perspiration was profuse. When the time prescribed had expired, the screen was placed round him, the bather was taken out of his grave and well rubbed, and he was allowed to put on his clothes and to depart. It was so disagreeable, that my uncle could never summon courage to undergo the operation a second time; but several of his friends had taken an earth-bath frequently, and they thought that the process was of great use to them."

"I have seen persons in the earth-bath myself. I well remember going with my uncle the first time he consulted Dr. Graham. A man servant, in a splendid livery, received us, and conducted us into the garden, and we saw there what seemed to be a bed of cauliflowers. It was the age of wigs, of powdered wigs; and there were several old gentlemen buried up to the neck in the ground, with the head only to be seen above the earth, and a well whitened wig upon it. The footman led my uncle up to one of the most considerable of the wigs, and introduced him to his physician: 'This, sir, is Dr. Graham.' For the doctor took a bath every morning himself, to encourage his patients, and

shone forth on the surface of mother earth as the biggest of the big wigs. He could not feel my uncle's pulse, for his arms were interred as well as his body; but he looked at his tongue, and asked him very many questions, in exact accordance with the practice of the College; and finally he prescribed an earth-bath, which shortly afterwards my uncle took."

"How dreadful!" all the ladies exclaimed with one voice; "it must be just like being buried alive! Were there any women there?"

"Not when I was present, certainly; and I rather think that females did not take these baths; and yet I recollect that the advertisements strongly recommended them to ladies as an unfailing remedy for sterility, inasmuch as the earth would surely impart to them some portion of its fruitfulness, the earth being the fertile mother of all things."

"Did you ever see Dr. Graham's celestial bed?" my father asked.

"Never! I never saw it. That was sometime afterwards. The Doctor quite lost himself eventually. My uncle knew nothing of him then; we were obliged to drop his acquaintance!"

Whatever a celestial bed might be, an earth-bath must unquestionably be a most unpleasant remedy: the resurrection, the taking up the body and removing

the earth, however managed, must be disagreeable, and even perilous. It is not easy to take up a large and vigorous plant without injury,—without breaking its roots; but to dig up a portly, ponderous parson, must be a process in medical horticulture requiring extreme nicety of manipulation, lest unhappily a sharp spade should cut off unawares some portion of his radical fibres. No wonder "My Uncle," his rheumatism notwithstanding, so soon had enough of it!

What security Sir Bysshe had to cover his advances to Dr. Graham, I was never informed. The celestial bed could hardly be a subject for mortgage and foreclosure; however, the bathing-place might be a real security.

The descendant Bysshe used to speak of his ancestor, Sir Bysshe, without love and without hate; with contemptuous indifference. Nevertheless, a certain indistinct sympathy might be traced as actually existing between natures so opposite and antagonistic, and arising out of a strong common feeling. Bysshe disliked his father, and Sir Bysshe disliked his son; according to the profound observation of Lord Bacon, that every grandfather loves his grandson because he is his enemy's enemy, the basis of a treaty of mutual alliance already existed. Had this favourable disposition been cultivated, it would probably have borne fruit; but the poor poet

could never cultivate any soil less ungrateful than the two arid summits of the most sterile mountain on earth,—Parnassus.

The Baronet grandfather received the rare visits of his philosophic grandchild with politeness; kindness he had none; he conversed with him civilly, heard whatever was addressed to him with urbanity, was never shocked or offended at any proposition, be it what it might; never swore at him,—his son he cursed bitterly; he thanked him for his company, and hoped to see him again soon.

For speculative opinions the old gentleman cared as much as his old cat did; neither of them was ever offended at any sally, however bold: the toleration of Sir Bysshe was perfect, and very commendable; his indifference to everything, even to human progress and perfectibility, was most reprehensible:—

"They may found Plato's Republic as soon as they please, at Reigate, at Cuckfield, or even at Horsham; I have no objection to it whatever; but I would not take my leg off this stool, either to promote, or to prevent it."

"Men may believe what they will," thought the cat, "but be human belief what it may, it will never bring another mouse into our house, or make the mice which are here already more easy to be caught."

To return to Elizabeth and the Exiles of Siberia;

to Eliza and the exiles, who for poetical, not political offences, had voluntarily banished themselves to the ungenial climate of Keswick. Madame Cottin has not made them the subject of a moral tale, and they kept but few records, or reports, of their proceedings; little, therefore, can be told of them.

An extract from a letter written by Coleridge affirms, and no doubt truly, that the writer, had he fortunately been at Keswick when Shelley visited it, would have treated him less like a prig than Southey did; it is, moreover, in spirit candid, tolerant, and judicious:—

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER OF COLERIDGE.

"I think as highly of Shelley's genius—yea, and of his *heart*—as you can do. Soon after he left Oxford, he went to the Lakes, poor fellow! and with some wish, I have understood, to see me; but I was absent, and Southey received him instead. Now—the very reverse of what would have been the case in ninety-nine instances of a hundred—I *might* have been of use to him, and Southey could not; for I should have sympathised with his poetics, metaphysical reveries, and the very word metaphysics is an abomination to Southey, and Shelley would have felt that I understood him. His discussions—tending towards Atheism of a certain sort—would

not have scared *me;* for *me* it would have been a semi-transparent Larva, soon to be sloughed, and through which I should have seen the true *image*,—the final metamorphosis. Besides, I have ever thought that sort of Atheism the next best religion to Christianity; nor does the better faith I have learnt from Paul and John interfere with the cordial reverence I feel for Benedict Spinoza. As far as Robert Southey was concerned with him, I am quite certain that his harshness arose entirely from the frightful reports that had been made to him respecting Shelley's moral character and conduct,—reports essentially false; but, for a man of Southey's strict regularity and habitual self-government, rendered plausible by Shelley's own wild words, and horror of hypocrisy."

CHAPTER II.

SHELLEY was fugitive, volatile; he evaporated like ether, his nature being etherial; he suddenly escaped, like some fragrant essence; evanescent as a quintessence. He was a lovely, a graceful image, but fading, vanishing speedily from our sight, being portrayed in flying colours. He was a climber, a creeper, an elegant, beautiful, odoriferous parasitical plant; he could not support himself; he must be tied up fast to something of a firmer texture, harder and more rigid than his own, pliant, yielding structure; to some person of a less flexible formation: he always required a prop. In order to write the history of his fragile, unconnected, interrupted life, it is necessary to describe that of some ordinary every day person with whom he was familiar, and to introduce the real subject of the history, whenever a transitory glimpse of him can be caught.

In exhibiting a phantasmagoria, a magic lantern, a spectrum of prismatic colours, a solar microscope; the white sheet, the screen of blank paper, the

whitened wall claim no merit, no share in the beauty of the exhibition, yet are these indispensable adjuncts in order to display wonderful, beauteous, or striking phenomena.

It is not easy—it is often impossible, indeed—to relate the whole life of any one without entering into various details; in themselves, these are often unimportant, but they are required as a back ground to bring out the principal figure in proper relief.

In the dedication of the fragment of his "Essay on Friendship," he says: "I once had a friend, whom an inextricable multitude of circumstances has forced me to treat with apparent neglect."

The celebrated Cretan Maze, to which by the word "inextricable" he plainly alludes, as his friend can testify, was a labyrinth of which he was himself the architect, the Dædalus; and his poetic imagination alone created the Minotaur, the fancied monster that inhabited it, and exacted a cruel tribute. The inextricable, inexplicable, irremediable, unobservable error, in the real existence of which he with a rash credulity believed, was entirely of his own making, or imagining. Clotho spun the thread of life for the Divine Poet precisely as she spins it for other and less gifted mortals; but he so wound the skein, and weakly permitted others so to wind it for him, that it soon became, as he supposed, "inextricable;" although when it was most tangled it would have

been easy, with a little firmness, to have cut at once every knot. It would have been, indeed, no difficult task, with a moderate amount of patience and ordinary address, to have unravelled the intricacies caused solely by the perverse machinations and fraudulent ingenuity of sordid and selfish people.

The primary object, great final cause, and last and most important result of the poetical faculty and temperament is certainly to make, to create; but the incidental consequences are also to destroy: a poet is a maker, but he is likewise a marrer. I have often wondered and asked myself and others, and amongst the rest my friend, as I stated before, how many poets the world could bear at once, all simultaneously energising destructively?

This question, however, can never arise in practice; for, fortunately or unfortunately, the number of poets has always been very limited: a real poet is of rare occurrence.

Having wasted much money on the bootless expedition to London, and on an expensive journey by post to Cumberland, as much as would have maintained them all in comfort for some months at York, the unfortunate exiles found themselves without resources, and were in great straits, in a land of strangers,—of persons less improvident, perhaps, but not less needy, than they were. It was no longer in my power to assist my friend; a loan of twenty

pounds, or thirty pounds, will enable a single man to hold his way for some time, but to the master of a family such paltry help avails little: it is a drop in a bucket.

A retired naval captain, however gallant, generous, and good-natured he may be, is seldom a wealthy man. Bysshe had exhausted the bounty and the benevolence of his uncle, who could inclose no more bank-post bills in his kind, jovial letters. These, no doubt, were as genial as ever; but all the hero of many battles, of many sea-fights, could now do for his high-spirited and studious nephew was to advise him to live in as economical a manner as possible. Excellent advice, and worthy of honour and acceptance; but it is impracticable, even for an inspired poet, and such unquestionably he was, to subsist upon air,—upon the pure, keen, searching air of the mountains.

Various attempts were made to procure the requisite supplies, but in vain. At last, the father of his wife gave him grudgingly a small sum. It was unworthy of a Christian, or a Jew, to refuse at least some small pittance, for present and most urgent necessities, to a married daughter, whose filial disobedience had elevated her from a coffee-house to Castle Goring. Besides, his model daughter, Eliza, had never offended him by any like act of prosperous undutifulness; she unquestionably had

never forfeited her hereditary right to a moderate pension.

The accursed thirst of gold defeats its darling objects, even in the breast of a greedy vintner, of a *perfidus caupo*. This sparing, but seasonable aid, enabled them to remain at Keswick; the dates of letters show that they resided there about three months, from the middle of November, 1811, to the middle of the following February.

The campaign of the year 1812, as well as the year itself, was opened by a spirited attack upon the intrenchments of a veteran philosopher. Shelley boldly assailed no less a chief than the venerable William Godwin, whose acquaintance he was determined to make without farther delay, and whom accordingly he addressed by letter, without introduction, as he was wont to do in cases of great literary emergency. Bysshe's four letters to the author of "Political Justice" comprehend whatever is now known of this period of his life, and they will be read with deep interest; but the contents must be received with caution, and with a certain distrust; for, together with much truth, they contain some fiction: some flights of imagination, some strains of poetry, have here and there thrown a false light upon a solid structure of facts. It is much to be regretted, that, after the most careful and diligent research through all our repositories, we have not

yet been able to find the calm answers of the old philosopher to the fervid epistles of the youthful poet. But perseverance frequently insures success, and often renewed researches are now and then rewarded by fresh discoveries; all that has been mislaid is not lost; and we may still cherish the hope that another edition of Shelley's life may present, together with other desired documents, William Godwin's earliest letters to his illustrious correspondent. Slight traces of thought, scattered rays of light, which gleam faintly at intervals, as it were, through crevices and interstices in the young man's letters, strongly stimulate a 'liberal and enlightened curiosity to long for the perusal of the missing papers.

KESWICK, CUMBERLAND, *January* 3, 1812.

YOU will be surprised at hearing from a stranger. No introduction has, nor in all probability ever will authorise that which common thinkers would call a liberty; it is, however a liberty which, although not sanctioned by custom, is so far from being reprobated by reason, that the dearest interests of mankind imperiously demand that a certain etiquette of fashion should no longer keep "man at a distance from man," or impose its flimsy fancies between the free communication of intellect.

The name of Godwin has been used, to excite

in me feelings of reverence and admiration. I have been accustomed to consider him a luminary too dazzling for the darkness which surrounds him. From the earliest period of my knowledge of his principles, I have ardently desired to share, on the footing of intimacy, that intellect which I have delighted to contemplate in its emanations.

Considering, then, these feelings, you will not be surprised at the inconceivable emotions with which I learned your existence and your dwelling. I had enrolled your name in the list of the honourable dead. I had felt regret that the glory of your being had passed from this earth of ours. It is not so; you still live, and, I firmly believe, are still planning the welfare of human kind.

I have but just entered on the scene of human operations; yet my feelings and my reasonings correspond with what yours were. My course has been short, but eventful. I have seen much of human prejudice, suffered much from human persecution, yet I see no reason hence inferrible which should alter my wishes for their renovation. The ill-treatment I have met with has more than ever impressed the truth of my principles on my judgment. I am young, I am ardent in the cause of philanthropy and truth; do not suppose that this is vanity; I am not conscious that it influences this portraiture. I imagine myself dispassionately

describing the state of my mind. I am young; you have gone before me,—I doubt not, are a veteran to me in the years of persecution. Is it strange that, defying prejudice as I have done, I should outstep the limits of custom's prescription, and endeavour to make my desire useful by a friendship with William Godwin?

I pray you to answer this letter. Imperfect as may be my capacity, my desire is ardent and unintermitted. Half an hour would be at least humanely employed in the experiment. I may mistake your residence; certain feelings, of which I may be an inadequate arbiter, may induce you to desire concealment; I may not, in fine, have an answer to this letter. If I do not, when I come to London, I shall seek for you. I am convinced I could represent myself to you in such terms as not to be thought wholly unworthy of your friendship; at least, if desire for universal happiness has any claim upon your preference, that desire I can exhibit. Adieu! I shall earnestly await your answer.

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, at M. J. Godwin's,
Juvenile Library, Skinner Street, London.

KESWICK, *January* 10, 1812.

SIR,

It is not otherwise to be supposed than that

I should appreciate your avocations far beyond the pleasure or benefit which can accrue to me from their sacrifice. The time, however, will be small which may be mis-spent in reading this letter; and much individual pleasure as an answer might give me, I have not the vanity to imagine that it will be greater than the happiness elsewhere diffused during the time which its creation will occupy.

You complain that the generalising character of my letter renders it deficient in interest; that I am not an individual to you. Yet, intimate as I am with your character and your writings, intimacy with *yourself* must in some degree precede this exposure of my peculiarities. It is scarcely possible, however pure be the morality which he has endeavoured to diffuse, but that generalisation must characterise the uninvited address of a stranger to a stranger.

I proceed to remedy the fault. I am the son of a man of fortune in Sussex. The habits of thinking of my father and myself never coincided. Passive obedience was inculcated and enforced in my childhood. I was required to love, because it was *my duty* to love: it is scarcely necessary to remark, that coercion obviated its own intention. I was haunted with a passion for the wildest and most extravagant romances. Ancient books of Chemistry and Magic were perused with an enthusiasm of wonder, almost amounting to belief. My sentiments

were unrestrained by anything within me; external impediments were numerous, and strongly applied; their effect was merely temporary.

From a reader, I became a writer of romances; before the age of seventeen I had published two, "St. Irvyn" and "Zastrozzi," each of which, though quite uncharacteristic of me as now I am, yet serves to mark the state of my mind at the period of their composition. I shall desire them to be sent to you: do not, however, consider this as any obligation to yourself to misapply your valuable time.

It is now a period of more than two years since first I saw your inestimable book of "Political Justice;" it opened to my mind fresh and more extensive views; it materially influenced my character, and I rose from its perusal a wiser and a better man. I was no longer the votary of romance; till then I had existed in an ideal world—now I found that in this universe of ours was enough to excite the interest of the heart, enough to employ the discussions of reason; I beheld, in short, that I had duties to perform. Conceive the effect which the "Political Justice" would have upon a mind before jealous of its independence, participating somewhat singularly in a peculiar susceptibility.

My age is now *nineteen;* at the period to which I allude I was at Eton. No sooner had I formed

the principles which I now profess, than I was anxious to disseminate their benefits. This was done without the slightest caution. I was twice expelled, but recalled by the interference of my father. I went to Oxford. Oxonian society was insipid to me, uncongenial with my habits of thinking. I could not descend to common life: the sublime interest of poetry, lofty and exalted achievements, the proselytism of the world, the equalisation of its inhabitants, were to me the soul of my soul. You can probably form some idea of the contrast exhibited to my character by those with whom I was surrounded. Classical reading and poetical writing employed me during my residence at Oxford.

In the meantime I became, in the popular sense of the word, a sceptic. I printed a pamphlet, avowing my opinion, and its occasion. I distributed this anonymously to men of thought and learning, wishing that Reason should decide on the case at issue: it was never my intention to deny it. Mr. ——, at Oxford, among others, had the pamphlet; he showed it to the Master and the Fellows of University College, and *I* was sent for. I was informed, that in case I denied the publication, no more would be said. I refused, and was expelled.

It will be necessary, in order to elucidate this part of my history, to inform you, that I am heir by

entail to an estate of £6000 per annum. My principles have induced me to regard the law of primogeniture, as an evil of primary magnitude. My father's notions of family honour are incoincident with my knowledge of public good. I will never sacrifice the latter to any consideration. My father has ever regarded me as a blot, a defilement of his honour. He wished to induce me by poverty to accept of some commission in a distant regiment, and in the interim of my absence to prosecute the pamphlet, that a process of outlawry might make the estate, on his death, devolve to my younger brother. These are the leading points of the history of the man before you. Others exist, but I have thought proper to make some selection, not that it is my design to conceal or extenuate any part, but that I should by their enumeration quite outstep the bounds of modesty. Now, it is for you to judge whether, by permitting me to cultivate your friendship, you are exhibiting yourself more really useful than by the pursuance of those avocations, of which the time spent in allowing this cultivation would deprive you. I am now earnestly pursuing studious habits. I am writing "An inquiry into the causes of the failure of the French Revolution to benefit mankind." My plan is that of resolving to lose no opportunity to disseminate truth and happiness.

I am married to a woman whose views are similar to my own. To you, as the regulator and former of my mind, I must ever look with real respect and veneration.

Yours sincerely,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

KESWICK, *Jan.* 16, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

That so prompt and so kind an answer should have relieved my mind I had scarcely dared to hope; to find that he—who as an author had gained my love and confidence, whose views and habits I had delighted to conjecture from his works, whose principles I had adopted, and every trace of whose existence is now made sacred, and I hope, eternally so, by associations, which throw the charm of feeling over the deductions of reason—that he, as a man, should be my friend and my adviser, the moderator of my enthusiasm, the personal exciter and strengthener of my virtuous habits: all this was more than I dared to trust myself to hope, and which now comes to me almost like a ray of second existence.

Without the deceit of self-flattery, which might lead me to think that my intellectual powers demanded your time, those circumstances, which

arbitrarily—or, as may be said, fortuitously—place me in a situation capable hereafter of considerably influencing the actions of others, induce me to think that I shall not "in publica commoda peccem, si longo sermone morer tua tempora."

I know not how to describe the pleasure which your last letter has given me; that William Godwin should have a "deep and earnest interest in *my* welfare," cannot but produce the most intoxicating sensations. It may be my vanity which is thus flattered, but I am much deceived in myself, if love and respect for the great and worthy form not a very considerable part of my feelings.

I cannot help considering you as a friend and adviser, whom I have known very long; this circumstance must generate a degree of familiarity, which will cease to appear surprising to you, when the intimacy, which I had acquired with your writings, so much preceded the information which led to my first letter. It may be said, that I have derived little benefit or injury from artificial education. I have known no tutor or adviser (*not excepting my father*) from whose lessons and suggestions I have not recoiled with disgust.

The knowledge which I have, whatever it may be (putting out of the question the age of the grammar and the horn-book), has been acquired by my unassisted efforts. I have before given you a

slight sketch of my earlier habits and feelings —my present are, in my own opinion, infinitely superior — they are elevated and disinterested: such as they are, you have principally produced them.

With what delight, what cheerfulness, what good-will, may it be conceived, that I constitute myself the pupil of him, under whose actual guidance my very thoughts have hitherto been arranged.

You mistake me, if you think that I am angry with my father. I have ever been desirous of a reconciliation with him, but the price which he demands for it is a renunciation of my opinions, or, at least, a subjection to conditions which should bind me to act in opposition to their very spirit. It is probable that my father has *acted* for my welfare, but the manner in which he has done so will not allow me to suppose that he has *felt* for it, unconnectedly with certain considerations of birth; and feeling for these things was not feeling for me. I never loved my father—it was not from hardness of heart, for I have loved and do love warmly. You say, "Being yet a scholar, I ought to have no intolerable itch to become a teacher." I have not, so far as any publications of mine are irreconcilable with the general good, or so far as they are negative. I do not set up for a judge of controversies, but into whatever company I go, I have introduced my own

sentiments, partly with a view, if they were anywise erroneous, that unforeseen elucidations might rectify them; or, if they were not, that I should contribute my mite to the treasury of wisdom and happiness.

I hope, in the course of our communication, to acquire that sobriety of spirit which is the characteristic of true heroism.

I have not heard, without benefit, that Newton was a modest man; I am not ignorant that vanity and folly delight in forwardness and assumption. But I think there is a line to be drawn between affectation of unpossessed talents and the deceit of self-distrust, by which much power has been lost to the world; for

> "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

This line may be called "the modesty of nature." I hope I am somewhat anxious not to overstep its boundaries. I will not again crudely obtrude my peculiar opinions or my doubts on the world. But could I not, at the same time, improve my own powers, and diffuse true and virtuous principles? Many, with equally confined talents to my own, are by publications scattering the seeds of prejudice and selfishness. Might not an exhibition of truth, with equal elegance and depth, suffice to counteract the

deleterious tendency of their principles.? Does not writing hold the next place to colloquial discussion in eliciting and classing the powers of the mind? I am willing to become a scholar — nay, a pupil. My humility and confidence, where I am conscious that I am not imposed upon, and where I perceive talents and powers so certainly and undoubtedly superior, are unfeigned and complete. I have desired the publications of my early youth to be sent to you. You will perceive that "Zastrozzi" and "St. Irvyn" were written prior to my acquaintance with your writings—the "Essay on Love," a little poem—since. I had, indeed, read "St. Leon" before I wrote "St. Irvyn;" but the reasonings had then made little impression.

In a few days we set off to Dublin. I do not know exactly when, but a letter addressed to Keswick will find me. Our journey has been settled some time. We go principally to *forward as much as we can* the Catholic Emancipation.

Southey, the poet, whose principles were pure and elevated, once, is now the paid champion of every abuse and absurdity. I have had much conversation with him. He says, "You will think as I do when you are as old." I do not feel the least disposition to be Mr. S.'s proselyte.

In the summer we shall be in the north of Wales. Dare I hope that you will come to see us? Perhaps

this would be an unfeasible neglect of your avocations. I shall hope it until you forbid me.

I remain, with the greatest respect,

Your most sincere and devoted,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

KESWICK, CUMBERLAND, *January* 28, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your letter has reached me on the eve of our departure for Dublin. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of answering it, although we shall probably have reached Ireland before an answer to this can arrive. You do us a great and essential service by the enclosed introduction to Mr. Curran; he is a man whose public character I have admired and respected. You offer an additional motive for hastening our journey. I have not long been married. My wife is the partner of my thoughts and feelings. *My* state at the period of our first knowledge of each other was isolated and friendless; *hers* was embittered by family disagreements and a system of domestic oppressions. We agreed to unite our fates, and the reasons that operated to induce our submission to the ceremonies of the Church were the many advantages of benefiting society which the despotism of custom would cut us off from in case of our nonconformity. My peculiar reasons were considerations

of the unequally weighty burden of disgrace and hatred which a resistance to this system would entail upon my companion. A man, in such a case, is a man of gallantry and spirit,—a woman loses all claim to respect and politeness. She has lost modesty, which is the female criterion of virtue, and those, whose virtues extend no farther than modesty, regard her with hatred and contempt.

You regard early authorship detrimental to the cause of general happiness. I confess this has not been my opinion, even when I have bestowed deep, and, I hope, disinterested thought upon the subject.

If any man would determine, sincerely and cautiously, at every period of his life, to publish books which should contain the real state of his feelings and opinions, I am willing to suppose that this portraiture of his mind would be worth many metaphysical disquisitions; and one, whose mind is strongly imbued with an ardent desire of communicating pleasurable sensations, is of all others the least likely to publish any feelings or opinions, but such as should excite the reader to discipline in some sort his mind into the same state as that of the writer.

With these sentiments, I have been preparing an address to the Catholics of Ireland, which, however deficient may be its execution, I can by no means

admit that it contains one sentiment which *can* harm the cause of liberty and happiness. It consists of the benevolent and tolerant deductions of philosophy reduced into the simplest language, and such as those who by their uneducated poverty are most susceptible of evil impressions from Catholicism may clearly comprehend. I know it can do no harm; it cannot excite rebellion, as its main principle is to trust the success of a cause to the energy of its truth. It cannot "widen the breach between the kingdoms," as it attempts to convey to the vulgar mind sentiments of universal philanthropy, and whatever impressions it may produce, they can be no others but those of peace and harmony; it owns no religion but benevolence, no cause but virtue, no party but the world. I shall devote myself with unremitting zeal, as far as an uncertain state of health will permit, towards forwarding the great ends of virtue and happiness in Ireland; regarding as I do the present state of that country's affairs as an opportunity which, if I, being thus disengaged, permit to pass unoccupied, I am unworthy of the character which I have assumed. Enough of Ireland!

I anticipated in my own mind your sentiments on the remark which you quoted from my last letter concerning my father. I am not a stranger to the immense complexity of human feelings, but

when I find generosity so exceedingly outweighed in any one's conduct by the contrary and less extended principle, then I despair of good fruits, seeing marks of barrenness. I have a great wish of adding to my father's happiness, because the filial connection seems to render it, as it were, more particularly in my power; but it is impossible. A little time since, he sent to me a letter, through his attorney, renewing an allowance of two hundred pounds per annum, but with this remark, "that his sole reason for so doing was to prevent my cheating strangers." The insult contained in these words, as applied to me, excites no feelings of repulsion or hatred towards him, but it makes me despair of conciliation when I see how rooted is his prejudice against me.

I find myself near the end of my paper. My egotism appears inexhaustible. My relation of pupillage with regard to you in a manner excuses this apparent vanity. I wish to put you in possession of as much of my thoughts and feelings as I know myself. I shall regard as a most inestimable blessing my happy audacity in casting aside the trammels of custom, and drinking the streams of your mind at their fountain-head.

I will say no more of Wales at present. We have determined, next summer, to receive a most dear friend, of whom I shall speak hereafter, in some

romantic spot. Perhaps I shall be able to prevail on you and your wife and children to leave the tumult and dust of London for a while. However that may be, I shall certainly see you in London. I am not yet of age. At that time, I have great hopes of being enabled to offer you a house of my own. Philanthropy is confined to no spot.—Adieu!

Direct your next—"Post-office, Dublin."

My wife sends her respects.

Believe me, in all sincerity of heart, yours truly, sincerely,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

CHAPTER III.

SHELLEY'S letters to William Godwin must be received with caution; the young poet saw events through the spectacles of his pregnant and prurient fancy, and not as they really were.

He was altogether incapable of rendering an account of any transaction whatsoever, according to the strict and precise truth, and the bare, naked realities of actual life; not through an addiction to falsehood, which he cordially detested, but because he was the creature, the unsuspecting and unresisting victim, of his irresistible imagination.

Had he written to ten different individuals the history of some proceeding in which he was himself a party, and an eye-witness, each of his ten reports would have varied from the rest in essential and important circumstances. The relation given on the morrow would be unlike that of the day, as the latter would contradict the tale of yesterday. Take some examples. He writes:—

"I was informed at Oxford, that in case I denied

the publication, no more would be said. I refused, and was expelled."

This is incorrect; no such offer was made, no such information was given; but musing on the affair, as he was wont, he dreamed that the proposal had been declined by him, and thus he had the gratification of believing, that he was more of a martyr than he really was. Again he writes thus:—

"At the period to which I allude, I was at Eton. No sooner had I formed the principles, which I now profess, than I was anxious to disseminate their benefits. This was done without the slightest caution. I was twice expelled, but recalled by the interference of my father."

All this is purely imaginary: he never published anything controversial at Eton; he was never expelled; not twice, not once. His poetic temperament was overpowered by the grandeur and awfulness of the occasion, when he took up his pen to address the author of Caleb Williams, so that the auspicious Apollo, to relieve and support his favourite son, shed over his head a benign vision. He saw himself at his Dame's with Political Justice, which he had lately borrowed from Dr. Lind, open before him. He had read a few pages and had formed his principles in a moment; he was thrown into a rapture by the truisms, mares'-nests, and paradoxes, which he had met with.

He sees himself in the printing-loft of "J. Pote, bibliopola et typographus," amongst Eton grammars and Eton school-books, republishing with the rapidity of a dream, and "without the slightest caution," Godwin's heavy and unsaleable volumes. He sees himself before the Dons convened and expelled; and, lastly, he beholds the Honourable Member for Shoreham weeping on his knees, like Priam at the feet of Achilles, and imploring the less inexorable Dr. Keate.

All this, being poetically true, he firmly and loyally believes, and communicates, as being true in act, fact, and deed, to his venerable correspondent. One more instance, and that is still more extraordinary; he says:

"My father, wished to induce me, by poverty, to accept of some commission in a distant regiment, in the interim of my absence to prosecute the pamphlet, that a process of outlawry might make the estate on his death devolve to my younger brother."

No offer of a commission in the army was ever made to Bysshe; it is only in a dream, that the prosecution, outlawry, and devolution of the estate could find a place. The narration of such proceedings would have been too strong and too strange for a German romance; it would have been too large a requisition upon the reader's

credulity to ask him to credit them in the father of Zastrozzi, or of St. Irvyn; or even in the unnatural parent of Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew. Certain other complaints concerning his father's conduct are unintentionally exaggerated, or arise from misconception.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable, that he ought to have made his eldest son and heir a fixed, moderate and competent allowance, and to have left him to the full enjoyment of his opinions, or rather, to be more exact, to the free indulgence of his insatiable appetite for discussion.

"You know more than any other person of your friend Shelley; pray tell me, what were his real opinions?"

This question has often been addressed to me, and I have as often, at least when the inquirer was a person worthy of a serious answer, resolved it truly and fairly; but, I fear, seldom in a manner quite satisfactory to him who asked me, by reason of the inherent difficulty and complexity of the subject. Marsilius Ficinus, it is believed, was better read in Plato than any other man ever was, at least in modern times. He has been duly evoked from the dead, and is in attendance, by virtue of a writ of subpœna; his expenses having been tendered to him, to submit himself to an examination. The distinguished Platonist is asked,

"What were the real opinions of Socrates, as they are expressed in Plato's Dialogues?"

What answer can the dead witness give? Socrates was the opponent, at least wherever he could hope to meet with a respondent, of every thesis that was propounded to him. In like manner Shelley's real opinions were always those which were not held by any companion at all likely to dispute with him. His confession of faith was made in this fashion. I am a Republican; a pure republic is an impossibility; what you mean by a republic is in truth an aristocracy. I am an aristocrat: all men are naturally equal; how then can one man be better than another? I believe in revealed religion: there cannot be a revelation, it is absolutely impracticable. I hold by natural religion: no religion can be of nature, by revelation it may exist. The soul is immortal: you cannot prove that it is. Death is total annihilation: all the intellectual phenomena contradict the hypothesis of annihilation; it is untenable. What then were the real opinions of my highly gifted friend? Tell me, I pray you, my gentle readers; he never told me! Had Bysshe been left to himself, and been permitted, without disturbance from without, to follow his own inclinations, the burning, feverish, inextinguishable thirst for metaphysical speculation would have abated. He would have grown gradually weary of arguments

and disquisitions; and, in fact, he did eventually become tired of them, and he left them off in great measure, having learned, perhaps, to dogmatise a little instead, partly out of his own head, and partly from the writings of Plato, and of other ancient philosophers. The opposition, intolerance, and sometimes also persecution, which he suffered, served only to prolong the period of his addiction to the vain attempt to elicit the truth, and this he long and sincerely believed was to be effected by written and verbal argumentations.

His course of proceeding, even when he was most inclined to doubt and discuss, always appeared to judicious persons perfectly harmless. Nobody listened to his discourses, entered into his discussions, or read his controversial papers; unless, like Bysshe, he had a decided taste for such intellectual exercises, and was therefore as bad as himself; if, indeed, there was anything bad in the matter, and it is quite certain, that there was not. As to making converts to any peculiar fancies, it is not by disputing, that conversions are made; this is to be effected by persuasion, which is a very different process. When we were taking a walk together after he had been silent for a while, which happened occasionally, I have said to him, suddenly:—

"Come, Bysshe, let us have a good, long controversy! I am getting indifferent and lax, respecting

my own crotchets, and so are you as to your well-founded opinions, most lamentably so; let us dispute together for an hour or two, and each will confirm himself in his errors, and greatly strengthen them!"

He did not like my sally, feeling that the remark was but too just; he called it scoffing, and perhaps it was; and he added angrily:—

"Your mind is not fitted for the reception of truth!" and perhaps it is not.

Having resided for three months very unpleasantly at Keswick, with every element of discomfort around him, and without the consolation of congenial society, for which the correspondence lately entered into with William Godwin proved an insufficient substitute, Bysshe was strongly impelled to change his abode, and to try to ameliorate his condition. The change which he proposed to himself was an extraordinary one; it was a mission to Ireland, in order at once thereby to carry into effect Catholic emancipation, and to procure a repeal of the Union Act by means of an Association of philanthropists, and also to accomplish a complete regeneration of that country. I had never heard him mention Catholic Emancipation, or Catholic Disabilities; and I do not believe that he ever had any definite notion of the meaning of these party phrases. As to the Union Act, I am very sure that he was always entirely ignorant of that statute, of its enactments and provisions, having

certainly never read a single clause, or line, of the Act, which he suddenly took upon himself to abrogate. I have often wondered, and endeavoured to discover, but without success, who put this notable project into his head. I have suspected that he fell in with some wandering apostle of Irish grievances hiding himself amongst the mountains, because he disliked the companionship of Oreads and Dryads less than that of sheriff's officers and catchpoles,—with some Hibernian Hampden brimful of sympathy for his persecuted country, and of aversion for his persecuting creditors. I have supposed that the coffee-house in Mount Street was possibly infested by Irish patriots, and that he might therefore have received at home, through the original suggestions of these estimable clients and customers, a hint, or even a plan, of his wild-goose chase; but I never could discover the source of the strange scheme. He did not communicate his intentions to me at the time. I never heard of his exploits in Dublin until after their termination, and but little did I learn at any period from himself. He seldom spoke of them. If he ever referred to the subject at all, it was briefly; and in truth he appeared to be heartily ashamed of the whole proceeding. Whatever can be discovered concerning this Irish dream, the vision of want of judgment, must be made out from his correspondence with his newly-acquired friend, and which has only

recently come into my hands. In his letter of the 16th of January, 1812, he says: "In a few days we set off to Dublin. Our journey has been settled for some time. We go principally to forward, as much as we (viz., Harriet, Eliza, and myself) can, the Catholic Emancipation."

On the 28th of January, he writes: "Your letter has reached me, on the eve of our departure for Dublin."

A letter from Dublin of the 24th of February states that they have just arrived there. Six most interesting letters, three of them from William Godwin, will describe the labours of the mission in the capital of Ireland. Bysshe invariably sent me a copy of all his other works, whether long or short, in verse or in prose, as soon as they were published, or more commonly as soon as they were printed, but he never gave me, either at the time of their appearance or subsequently, his two Irish pamphlets. He never named them to me, and I saw them for the first time a few months ago. The first and longer pamphlet was written in England, as it informs us, and as was stated in a letter; it is entitled "An Address to the Irish People, by Percy Bysshe Shelley: Dublin, 1812." It consists of twenty-two pages, closely and badly printed, on coarse paper; its appearance is mean and vulgar. The title of the other pamphlet is "Proposals for an Association of

those philanthropists who, convinced of the inadequacy of the moral and political state of Ireland to produce benefits which are nevertheless attainable, are willing to unite to accomplish its regeneration; by Percy B. Shelly: Dublin." It is comprised in eighteen pages; the type is somewhat larger, but its aspect is not more attractive. The author's address is the same in both, "No. 7, Lower Sackville Street." The pamphlets are exceedingly scarce; I never saw any other copies than those which are now in my possession. I would willingly, therefore, give some extracts, but I cannot find a single paragraph worthy to be transcribed. They are poorly and feebly written; the style and the matter are worthy of the printer and the occasion, but quite unworthy of the author.

DUBLIN, *Feb.* 24, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

A most tedious journey by sea and land has brought us to our destination. I have delayed a few days informing you of it, because I inclose with this a little pamphlet, which I have just printed, and thereby save a double expense. I have wilfully vulgarised the language of this pamphlet, in order to reduce the remarks it contains to the taste and comprehension of the Irish peasantry, who have been too long brutalised by vice and ignorance. I conceive that the benevolent passions of their breasts

are in some degree excited, and individual interests in some degree generalised, by Catholic disqualifications and the oppressive influence of the Union Act; that some degree of indignation has arisen at the conduct of the Prince Regent, which might tend to blind insurrections. A crisis like this ought not to be permitted to pass unoccupied or unimproved. I have another pamphlet in the press, earnestly recommending to a different class the institution of a philanthropic society. No *unnatural unanimity* can take place, if secessions of the minority on any question are invariably made. It might segregate into twenty different societies, each coinciding generically, though differing specifically.

We have had a most tedious voyage. We were driven by a storm completely to the north of Ireland, in our passage from the Isle of Man. Harriet, my wife, and Eliza, my sister-in-law, were very much fatigued, after twenty-eight hours' tossing in a galliot during a violent gale. They are now tolerably recovered. I am exceedingly obliged by your letter of introduction to Mr. Curran. His speeches had interested me before I had any idea of coming to Ireland. It seems that he was the only man who would engage in behalf of the prisoners during the times of horror of the Rebellions. I have called upon him twice, but have not found him at home.

I hope that the motives which induce me to publish thus early in life do not arise from any desire of distinguishing myself any more than is consistent with and subordinate to usefulness. In the first place, my physical constitution is such as will not permit me to hope for a life so long as yours;—the person who is constitutionally nervous, and affected by slight fatigue at the age of nineteen, cannot expect firmness and health at fifty. I have therefore resolved to husband whatever powers I may possess, so that they may turn to the best account. I find that whilst my mind is actively engaged in writing or discussion, that it gains strength at the same time,—that the results of its present power are incorporated. I find that subjects grow out of conversation, and that though I begin a subject in writing with no definite view, it presently assumes a definite form, in consequence of the method that grows out of the induced train of thought. I therefore write, and I publish, because I will publish nothing that shall not conduce to virtue, and therefore my publications, so far as they do influence, shall influence to good. My views of society, and my hopes of it, meet with congenial ones in few breasts. But virtue and truth are congenial to many. I will employ no means but these for my object, and however visionary some may regard the ultimatum that I propose, if they act

virtuously they will, equally with myself, forward its accomplishment; and my publications will present to the moralist and metaphysician a picture of a mind, however juvenile and unformed, which had at the dawn of its knowledge taken a singular turn; and to leave out the early lineaments of its appearance would be to efface those which the attrition of the world had not deprived of right-angled originality. Thus much for egotism.

I am sorry that you cannot come to Wales in the summer. I had pictured to my fancy that I should first meet you in a spot like that in which Fleetwood met Ruffigny; that then every lesson of your wisdom might become associated in my mind with the forms of nature where she sports in the simplicity of her loveliness and magnificence, and each become imperishable together. This must not be yet. I will, however, hope that at some future time the sun-set of your evening days may irradiate my soul in scenes like these. I will come to London next autumn. A very dear friend has promised to visit us in Merionethshire in the summer, and I will own that I am not sufficient of a Stoic not to perceive that the grand and ravishing shapes of nature add to the joys of friendship. Besides, you must know that I either am, or fancy myself something of a poet.

You speak of my wife: she desires with me to

you, and to all connected with you, her best regards. She is a woman whose pursuits, hopes, fears, and sorrows were so similar to my own, that we married a few months ago. I hope in the course of this year to introduce her to you and yours, as I have introduced myself to you. It is only to those who have had some share in making me what I am that I can be thus free.—Adieu!

You will hear from me shortly. Give my love and respects to every one with whom you are connected. I feel myself almost at your fire-side.

Yours very sincerely,

P. B. SHELLEY.

Have they sent you the books? I send the little book for which I was expelled. I know that Milton believed Christianity, but I do not forget that Virgil believed ancient mythology.

To Mr. W. Godwin, London.

March 4, 1812.

MY GOOD FRIEND,

I have read all your letters (the first perhaps excepted) with peculiar interest, and I wish it to be understood by you, unequivocally, that as far as I can yet penetrate into your character, I conceive it to exhibit an extraordinary assemblage of lovely qualities, not without considerable defects. The defects do and always have arisen chiefly from this

source,—that you are still very young, and that, in certain essential respects, you do not sufficiently perceive that you are so.

In your last letter you say, "I publish, because I will publish nothing that shall not conduce to virtue; and therefore my publications, so far as they do influence, shall influence to good."

Oh! my friend, how short-sighted are the views which dictated this sentence! Every man, in every deliberate action of his life, imagines he sees a preponderance of good likely to result. This is the law of our nature, from which none of us can escape. You do not on this point generically differ from the human beings about you. Mr. Burke and Tom Paine, when they wrote on the French Revolution, perhaps equally believed that the sentiments they supported were essentially conducive to the welfare of man.

When Mr. Walsh resolved to purloin to his own use a few thousand pounds, with which to settle himself and his family and children in America, he tells us that he was for some time anxious that the effects of his fraud should fall upon Mr. Oldham, rather than upon Sir Thomas Plumer, because, in his opinion, Sir Thomas was the better man; and I have no doubt that he was fully persuaded that a greater sum of happiness would result from these thousand pounds being employed in settling his

innocent and lovely family in America, than in securing to his employer the possession of a large landed estate.

It is this feature of human nature that is the great basis of the duty of inquiry and disquisition. If every man, the ignorant, the half-enlightened, and the most patient and persisting philosopher, was always in the right, when he thought himself in the right, inquiry then, instead of holding a place in the first rank of human duties, would immediately subside into an innocent and elegant amusement for our hours of leisure. To you, who have been acquainted with me principally through my writings, I may perhaps be allowed to quote a passage of my own:—

"To ascertain the tendency of any work is a point of great difficulty. It is by no means impossible, that the books most pernicious in their effects that ever were produced, were written with intentions uncommonly elevated and pure."*

In the pamphlet you have just sent me, your views and mine as to the improvement of mankind are decisively at issue. You profess the immediate object of your efforts to be "the organization of a society, whose institution shall serve as a bond to its members." If I may be allowed to understand my book on "Political Justice," its pervading

* "Enquirer," Essay xx., p. 138.

principle is, that association is a most ill-chosen and ill-qualified mode of endeavouring to promote the political happiness of mankind. And I think of your pamphlet, however commendable and lovely are many of the sentiments it contains, that it will either be ineffective to its immediate object, or that it has no very remote tendency to light again the flames of rebellion and war. It is painful to me to differ so much from your views on the subject, but it is my duty to tell you that such is the case.

Does it not follow, that you have read my writings very slightly? I wish, at least, you had known whether our views were in harmony or opposition.

Discussion, reading, inquiry, perpetual communication, these are my favourite methods for the improvement of mankind: but associations, organized societies, I firmly condemn; you may as well tell the adder not to sting;

> "You may as well use question with the wolf;
> You may as well forbid the mountain pines
> To wag their high tops, and to make no noise
> When they are fretted with the gusts of heaven,

as tell organized societies of men, associated to obtain their rights and to extinguish oppression, prompted by a deep aversion to inequality, luxury, enormous taxes and the evils of war, to be innocent,

to employ no violence, and calmly to await the progress of truth. I never was at a public political dinner, a scene that I have not now witnessed for many years, that I did not see how the enthusiasm was lighted up, how the flame caught from man to man, how fast the dictates of sober reason were obliterated by the gusts of passion, and how near the assembly was like Alexander's compotators at Persepolis, to go forth and fire the city; or like the auditors of Anthony's oration over the body of Cæsar, to apply a flaming brand to the mansion of each several conspirator.

Discussion and conversation on the best interests of society are excellent, as long as they are unfettered, and each man talks to his neighbour in the freedom of congenial intercourse, as he happens to meet with him in the customary haunts of men, or in the quiet and beneficent intercourse of each other's fireside. But they then become unwholesome and poisonous when men shape themselves into societies, and become distorted with the artifices of organization. It will not then long be possible to reason calmly and dispassionately; men will heat each other into impatience and indignation against their oppressors; they will become tired of talking for ever, and will be in a hurry to act. If this view of things is true, applied to any country whatever, it is peculiarly and fearfully so when

applied to the fervent and impetuous character of the Irish.

The statement I have here made will end by convincing you, or we must be contented to entertain different, and almost opposite views on this momentous subject. In this case, I can assure you, it will produce no estrangement in my feelings towards you. I shall still acknowledge, as forwardly as ever, the lovely qualities that I set out with confessing in you, and shall only deeply and earnestly lament that you have been so essentially misled in the exercise of them.

One principle, that I believe is wanting in you, and all our too fervent and impetuous reformers, is the thought, that almost every institution or form of society is good in its place, and in the period of time to which it belongs. How many beautiful and admirable effects grew out of Popery and the monastic institutions, in the period, when they were in their genuine health and vigour! To them we owe almost all our logic and our literature. What excellent effects do we reap, even at this day, from the feudal system and from chivalry! In this point of view, nothing can, perhaps, be more worthy of our applause than the English constitution. Excellent to this purpose are the words of Daniel in his Apology for Rhyme; "Nor can it touch but of arrogant ignorance to hold this or that nation bar-

barous, these or those times gross, considering how this manifold creature, man, wheresoever he stand in the world, hath always some disposition of worth, entertains and affects that order of society which is best for his use, and is eminent for some one thing, or other, that fits his humours and the times." This is the truest and most sublime toleration! There is a period, indeed, when each institution is obsolete, and should be laid aside; but it is of much importance, that we should not proceed too rapidly in this, or introduce any change before its due and proper season.

I perfectly agree with you when you say that it is highly improving for a man, who is ever to write for the public, that he should write much while he is young. It improves him equally in the art of thinking and of expressing his thoughts. Till we come to try to put our thoughts upon paper, we can have no notion how broken and imperfect they are, or find where the imperfection lies. Language is a scheme of machinery of so subtle a kind, that it is only by long habit that we can learn to conduct it in a masterly manner, or to the best purposes. Swift, an eminent master of language, says in a letter written, I think, when he was about eighteen: — "Within these last few weeks I have written and blotted more quires of paper, and upon almost all sorts of subjects, than perhaps

any other man you have known in a twelvemonth."

But I see no necessary connection between writing and publishing; and, least of all, with one's name. The life of a thinking man, who does this, will be made up of a series of retractations. It is beautiful to correct our errors, to make each day a comment on the last, and to grow perpetually wiser; but all this need not be done before the public. It is commendable to wash one's face, but I will not wash mine in the saloon of the opera-house. A man may resolve, as you say, to present to the moralist and metaphysician a picture of all the successive turns and revolutions of his mind, and it is fit there should be some men, that should do this. But such a man must be contented to sacrifice general usefulness, and confine himself to this. Such a man was Rousseau; but not such a man was Bacon, or Milton.

Mankind will ascribe little weight and authority to a versatile character, that makes a show of all his imperfections. How shall I rely upon a man, they cry, who is not himself in his public character at all times the same. I have myself, with all my caution, felt some of the effects of this. You have already begun your retractation. You confess that your thesis on Atheism was not well judged or wise, though you still seek to shelter yourself under the

allegation, that it was harmless. I think the second chapter of your Retractations is not far distant.

You say that you count but on a short life. In that, too, you are erroneous. I shall not live to see you fourscore, but it is not impossible that my son will. I was myself, in early life, of a remarkably puny constitution. Pope, who was at all times kept alive only by means of art, reached his fifty-seventh year. The constitution of man is a theatre of change, and I think it not improbable, that at thirty, or forty, you will be a robust man.

How did you manage with Curran? I hope you have seen him. I should not wonder, however, if your pamphlet has frightened him. You should have left my letter with your card the first time you called, and then it was his business to have sought you.

I have not received your little romances. If they have a publisher in London, and you had given me his name, I could then have sent for them, and enforced your order for their delivery. But in your hand-writing I cannot even read their names.

One strange expression of your pamphlet give me leave to notice. You say to the people of Ireland: "I have come to this country to spare no pains, where expenditure may purchase your real benefit." Does this mean money? Do you mean to con-

tract debts, and lay out your thousands in establishing the association you so warmly recommend?

To descend from great things to small, I can perceive, that you are already infected with the air of that country. Your letter with its inclosures cost me, by post, £1. 1*s*. 8*d*.; and you say in it, that, "you send it in this way to save expense." The post always charges parcels that exceed a sheet or two, by weight, and they should, therefore, always be forwarded by some other conveyance.

Perhaps in this letter I have assumed too much of the instructor, and expressed myself with a bluntness and freedom that will shock you. The length of my letter ought to convince you of the warmth of my feelings, and my earnest desire to serve you.

To P. B. Shelley, Dublin.

DUBLIN, SACKVILLE STREET, *March* 8, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your letter affords me much food for thought; guide thou and direct me. In all the weakness of my inconsistencies, bear with me; the genuine respect which I bear for your character, the love with which your virtues have inspired me, is undiminished by any suspicion of externally constituted authority; when you reprove me, reason speaks; I acquiesce in her decisions. I know that

I am vain, that I assume a character which is perhaps unadapted to the limitedness of my experience, that I am without the modesty which is so generally considered an indispensable ornament to the ingenuousness of youth. I attempt not to conceal from others, or myself, these deficiencies, if such they are. That I have erred in pursuance of this line of conduct, I am well aware: in the opposite case, I think that my errors would have been more momentous and overwhelming. "A preponderance of resulting good is imagined in every action." I certainly believe that the line of conduct which I am now pursuing will produce a preponderance of good; when I get rid of this conviction, my conduct shall be changed.

Inquiry is doubtless necessary, nay, essential. I am eagerly open to every new information. I attempt to read a book which attacks my most cherished sentiments as calmly as one which corroborates them. I have not read your writings slightly; they have made a deep impression on my mind; their arguments are fresh in my memory; I have daily occasion to recur to them, as allies in the cause which I am here engaged in vindicating. To them, to you, I owe the inestimable boon of granted power, of arising from the state of intellectual sickliness and lethargy into which I was plunged two years ago, and of which "St. Irvyne"

and "Zastrozzi" were the distempered, although unoriginal visions.

I am not forgetful or unheeding of what you said of associations. But "Political Justice" was first published in 1793; nearly twenty years have elapsed since the general diffusion of its doctrines. What has followed? Have men ceased to fight? Have vice and misery vanished from the earth? Have the fire-side communications which it recommends taken place? Out of the many who have read that inestimable book, how many have been blinded by prejudice; how many, in short, have taken it up to gratify an ephemeral vanity, and when the hour of its novelty had passed, threw it aside, and yielded with fashion to the arguments of Mr. Malthus?

I have at length proposed a Philanthropic Association, which I conceive not to be contradictory, but strictly compatible with the principles of "Political Justice." The "Address" was principally designed to operate on the Irish mob. Can they be in a worse state than at present? Intemperance and hard labour have reduced them to machines. The oyster that is washed and driven at the mercy of the tides, appears to me an animal of almost equal elevation in the scale of intellectual being. Is it impossible to awaken a moral sense in the breasts of those who appear so unfitted for the high destination of their nature? Might not an

unadorned display of moral truth, suited to their comprehensions, produce the best effects? The state of society appears to me to be retrogressive. If there be any truth in the hopes which I so fondly cherish, then this cannot be. Yet, even if it be stationary, the eager activity of philanthropists is demanded. I think of the last twenty years with impatient scepticism, as to the progress which the human mind has made during this period. I will own that I am eager that something should be done. But my association. In some suggestions respecting it, I have the following:—"That any number of persons who meet together for philanthropical purposes, should ascertain by friendly discussion those points of opinion wherein they differ and those wherein they coincide, and should, by subjecting them to rational analysis, produce an unanimity founded on reason, and not the superficial agreement too often exhibited at associations for mere party purposes; that the minority, whose belief could not subscribe to the opinion of the majority on a division in any question of moment and interest, should recede."

"Some associations might, by refinement of secessions, contain not more than three or four members." I do not think a society such as this is incompatible with your chapter on associations; it purposes no violent or immediate measures; its

intentions are a facilitation of inquiry, and actually to carry into effect those confidential and private communications which you recommend. I send you with this the proposals, which will be followed by the "suggestions."

I had no conception of the depth of human misery until now. The poor of Dublin are assuredly the meanest and most miserable of all. In their narrow streets thousands seem huddled together,—one mass of animated filth. With what eagerness do such scenes as these inspire me! How self-confident, too, do I feel in my assumption to teach the lessons of virtue to those who grind their fellow beings into worse than annihilation. These were the persons to whom, in my fancy, I had addressed myself: how quickly were my views on this subject changed; yet how deeply has this very change rooted the conviction on which I came hither.

I do not think that my book can in the slightest degree tend to violence. The pains which I have taken, even to tautology, to insist on pacific measures; the necessity which every warrior and rebel must lie under to deny almost every passage of my book before he can become so, must at least exculpate me from tending to make him so. I shudder to think, that for the very roof that covers me, for the bed whereon I lie, I am indebted to the selfishness of man. A remedy must somewhere have

a beginning. Have I explained myself clearly? Are we now at issue?

I have not seen Mr. Curran. I have called repeatedly, left my address and my pamphlet. I *will* see him before I leave Dublin. I send a newspaper, and the "proposals." I had no conception that the packet I sent you would be sent by the post; I thought it would have reached you per coach.

Harriet joins in respects to you. Is your denial respecting Wales irrevocable? Would not your children gain health and spirits from the jaunt?

With sincerest respect yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

You will see the account of ME in the newspapers. I am vain, but not so foolish as not to be rather piqued than gratified at the eulogia of a journal. I have repeated my injunctions concerning *St. I.* and *Z.*

Expenditure is used in my address in a moral sense.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

March 14, 1812.

I TAKE up the pen again immediately on the receipt of yours, because I am desirous of making one more effort to save yourself and the Irish people from the calamities with which, I see, your mode of

proceeding to be fraught. In the commencement of this letter you profess to "acquiesce in my decisions," and you go on with those measures which, with no sparing and equivocal voice, I have condemned. I smile, with a bitter smile, a smile of much pain, at the impotence of my expostulations on so momentous a topic, when I observe these inconsistencies.

I have received nothing from you on this occasion but a letter and a newspaper. If you sent anything else—which I suspect from your saying, "I send you with this the Proposals"—it has not reached me; and I mention this circumstance because, of course, "I can only reason from what I know,"—though I am as well assured as I can be of any moral truth whatever, that nothing that is behind can possibly vitiate and overturn the conclusions I came to in my last letter, and which I repeat in this.

You say in the extract contained in the "Weekly Messenger," "I propose an association for the following purposes: first, of debating on the propriety of whatever measures may be agitated; and, secondly, for carrying, by united and individual exertion, such measures into effect when determined on."

Can anything be plainer than this? Do you not here exhort persons, who you say "are of scarcely

greater elevation in the scale of intellectual being than the oyster: thousands huddled together, one mass of animated filth," to take the redress of grievances into their own hands.

But if it were exactly the contrary, if you exhorted them to meet, having their hands carefully tied behind them before they came together, what would that avail? Would not the first strong sympathetic impulse which shot through the circle, like the electric fluid, cause them to break their cords, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire?"

The people of Ireland have been for a series of years in a state of diseased activity; and, misjudging that you are, you talk of awakening them. They will rise up like Cadmus's seed of dragon's teeth, and their first act will be to destroy each other. You say, "the pains you have taken, even to tautology, to insist on pacific measures, must at least exculpate *you* from tending to make the Irish peasant a warrior and a rebel!" This is not the language of a philosopher, or a reasoner. If you are "eager that something should be done," you must take all the consequences of your efforts for that purpose. It behoves the friend of man to search into the hidden seeds of things, and to view events in their causes. He scarcely deserves the name, who plunges without consideration into a

sea of important measures, and leaves the final result of all he begins to chance.

You have "insisted on pacific measures, even to tautology, and therefore judge yourself exculpated." But this is not so. I have made a main pillar of my doctrines of "Political Justice,"—a hostility to associations: and yet I cannot but consider your fearful attempt at creating a chain of associations as growing, however indirectly and unfairly, out of my book. If you had never read my book, you would probably never have gone to Ireland upon the errand that has now led you thither. I shall ever regret this effect of my book; and I can only seek consolation in the belief that it has done more good to many other persons, and the hope that it may contribute, with other mightier and more important causes, to the melioration of future ages.

You say, "what has been done within the last twenty years?" Oh, that I could place you on the pinnacle of ages, from which these twenty years would shrink to an invisible point! It is not after this fashion that moral causes work in the eye of Him who looks profoundly through the vast and, allow me to add, venerable machine of human society. But so reasoned the French revolutionists. Auspicious and admirable materials were working in the general mind of France; but these men said, as you say, when we look on the last twenty years,

"we are seized with a sort of moral scepticism,—we must own we are eager that something should be done." And see what has been the result of their doings! He that would benefit mankind on a comprehensive scale, by changing the principles and elements of society, must learn the hard lesson,—to put off self, and to contribute by a quiet, but incessant activity, like a rill of water, to irrigate and fertilise the intellectual soil.

Shelley, you are preparing a scene of blood! If your associations take effect to any extensive degree, tremendous consequences will follow, and hundreds, by their calamities and premature fate, will expiate your error. And then what will it avail you to say, "I warned them against this; when I put the seed into the ground, I laid my solemn injunctions upon it, that it should not germinate?"

If you wish to consider the sentiments which in the earnestness of my soul I have presented to you, you should consider my two letters as parts of the same discourse, and read them together. Do not be restrained by a false shame from retracting your steps; you cannot say, like Macbeth, "I am in blood-steps, in so far, that should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o'er."

I wish to my heart you would come immediately to London. I have a friend who has contrived a tube to convey passengers sixty miles an hour.

Be youth your tube! I have a thousand things I could say orally, more than I can say in a letter, on this important subject. Away! You cannot imagine how much all the females of my family, Mrs. G. and three daughters, are interested in your letters and your history.

17, GRAFTON STREET, *March* 18, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have said that I acquiesce in your decision, nor has my conduct militated with the assertion. I have withdrawn from circulation the publications wherein I erred, and am preparing to quit Dublin. It is not because I think that *such* associations as I conceived, would be deleterious, that I have withdrawn them. It is possible to festinate, or retard, the progress of human perfectibility; such associations as I would have recommended would be calculated to produce the former effect; the refinement of secessions would prevent a fictitious unanimity, as their publicity would render ineffectual any schemes of violent innovation. I am not one of those whom pride will restrain from admitting my own short-sightedness, or confessing a conviction which wars with those previously avowed. My schemes of organizing the ignorant I confess to be ill-timed. I cannot conceive that they were dangerous, as unqualified publicity was like-

wise enforced; moreover, I do not see that a peasant would attentively read my address, and, arising from the perusal, become imbued in sentiments of violence and bloodshed.

It is indescribably painful to contemplate beings capable of soaring to the heights of science, with Newton and Locke, without attempting to awaken them from a state of lethargy so opposite. The part of this city called the Liberty, exhibits a spectacle of squalidness and misery, such as might reasonably excite impatience in a cooler temperament than mine. But I submit; I shall address myself no more to the illiterate. I will look to events in which it will be impossible that I can share, and make myself the cause of an effect which will take place ages after I have mouldered in the dust; I need not observe that this resolve requires stoicism. To return to the heartless bustle of ordinary life, to take interest in its uninteresting details; I cannot. Wholly to abstract our views from self, undoubtedly requires unparalleled disinterestedness. There is not a completer abstraction than labouring for distant ages.

My association scheme undoubtedly grew out of my notions of political justice, first generated by your book on that subject. I had not, however, read in vain of confidential discussions, and a recommendation for their general adoption; not

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in vain had I been warned against a fictitious unanimity. I have had the opportunity of witnessing the latter at public dinners. The peculiarity of my association would have consisted in combining the adoption of the former with the rejection of the latter. Moreover, I desired to sink the question of immediate grievance in the more general and remote consideration of a highly perfectible state of society. I desired to embrace the present opportunity for attempting to forward the accomplishment of that event, and my ultimate views looked to an establishment of those familiar parties for discussion which have not yet become general.

It appears to me that on the publication of "Political Justice" you looked to a more rapid improvement than has taken place. It is my opinion, that if your book had been as general as the Bible, human affairs would now have exhibited a very different aspect.

I have read your letters,—read them with the attention and reverence they deserve. Had *I*, like you, been witness to the French Revolution, it is probable that my caution would have been greater. I have seen and heard enough to make me doubt the omnipotence of truth in a society so constituted, as that wherein we live. I shall make you acquainted with all my proceedings; if I err, probe me severely.

If I was alone, and had made no engagements, I would immediately come to London: as it is, I defer it for a time. We leave Dublin in three weeks.

A woman of extraordinary talents, whom I am so happy as to enroll in the list of those who esteem me, has engaged to visit me in Wales. Mrs. Shelley earnestly desires me to make one last attempt to induce you to visit Wales. If *you* absolutely cannot, may not your amiable family, with whom we all long to become acquainted, breathe with us the pure air of the mountains? Lest there be any informality in the petition, Mrs. Shelley desires her regards to Mrs. Godwin and family, urging the above. Miss Westbrook, my sister-in-law, resides with us; and, in one thing at least, none of us are deficient, viz., zeal and sincerity.

Fear no more for any violence, or hurtful measures, in which I may be instrumental in Dublin. My mind is now by no means settled on the subject of associations: they appear to me in one point of view useful, in another deleterious. I acquiesce in your decisions. I am neither haughty, reserved, nor unpersuadable. I hope that time will show your pupil to be more worthy of your regard than you have hitherto found him; at all events, that he will never be otherwise than sincere and true to you.

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

March 30, 1812.

DEAR SHELLEY,

I received your last letter on the 24th instant, and the perusal of it gave me a very high degree of pleasure. The way in which my emotion of pleasure poured itself out was in writing a letter to Curran, stating that I supposed he had kept himself aloof from you on account of your pamphlet, and that at my importunity you had given up your project, and that that being the case, I trusted he would oblige me by seeking the man, whom, under different circumstances, he had probably thought himself bound to shun. This was the most expressive way I could think of, to convey to you the delight I felt in your conduct. I have since, however, reflected that accidents might happen to prevent my project from taking effect in the manner, or at the time, I intended, and therefore I felt it incumbent on me to convey the language of my emotions directly to yourself. I can now look upon you as a friend. Before, I knew not what might happen. It was like making an acquaintance with Robert Emmett, who, I believe, like yourself, was a man of a very pure mind, but respecting whom I could not have told, from day to day, what calamities he might bring upon his country; how effectually (like the bear in the fable) he might smash the nose of his mother to pieces, when he intended only to

remove the noxious insect that tormented her,—what premature and tragical fate he might bring down upon himself. Now I can look on you, not as a meteor, ephemeral, but as a lasting friend, who, according to the course of nature, may contribute to the comforts of my closing days. Now I can look on you as a friend, like myself, but I hope more effectually and actively useful, who is prone to study the good of his fellow men, but with no propensities threatening to do them extensive mischief under the form and intention of benefit.

I observe that you are but half a convert to my arguments. No matter, you have auspiciously yielded to them, and time will do the rest. You say "you do not see that a peasant could arise from the perusal of your address to become imbued in sentiments of violence and bloodshed." This is the language of an embryo philosopher, not of one who had passed a long and patient noviciate in the study of the human mind.

Moral causes are like chemical ones. When the chemist adds another ingredient to his mixture, he must think not only of the qualities of that ingredient, but of those of all the ingredients that have gone before, or else he will be little qualified to anticipate the result. The ingredient he has added is perhaps, considered by itself, entirely innoxious; but if, co-operating with what was before in the

retort, it blows up his machinery, or his chamber, or himself and the houses of next neighbours in the air, he is, upon a strict and sound calculation, answerable for the event. If he did not understand the thing with which he intermeddled, he should have withheld his profane hands from so awful a business. If he had not unthinkingly added his last fatal ingredient, no such calamity would have taken place.

You say "I will look to events, in which it will be impossible I can share, or make myself the cause of an effect, which will take place ages after I shall have mouldered into dust." In saying this, you run from one extreme to the other. I have often had occasion to apply a principle on the subject of education which is equally applicable here: "Be not early discouraged, sow the seed, and after a season, and when you least look for it, it will germinate and produce a crop." I have again and again been hopeless concerning the children, with whom I have voluntarily, or by the laws of society, been concerned. Seeds of intellect and knowledge, seeds of moral judgment and conduct, I have sown, but the soil for a long time seemed "ungrateful to the tiller's care." It was not so. The happiest operations were going on quietly and unobserved, and at the moment, when it was of the most importance, they unfolded themselves to the delight

of every beholder. These instances of surprise are owing solely to the bluntness of our senses. *You* find little difference between the men of these islands and of Europe now and twenty years ago. If you looked more keenly into these things, you would perceive that the alteration is immense. The human race has made larger strides to escape from a state of childhood in these twenty years, than perhaps in any hundred years preceding. The thing most to be desired, I believe, is to keep up the intellectual, and in some sense the solitary, fermentation, and to procrastinate the contact and consequent action. This thing has its time. "In the hour that ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

W. G.

To P. B. Shelley, Dublin.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE was one meeting of Philanthropists, for it was reported in a newspaper, and probably puffed a little, perhaps for a valuable consideration: whether there were more meetings does not appear. Poor Bysshe made a speech, and proposed his scheme; but it did not succeed. He talks about "sobriety, regularity, and thought," in his printed discourses; "that before anything can be done with effect, these must be entered into, and firmly resolved upon." "Irishmen must reform themselves, not by force of arms, but by power of mind, and reliance on truth and justice. No Irishman must swerve from the path of duty. Be open, sincere, single-hearted. O Irishmen, reform yourselves; desire peace and harmony, benevolence and a spirit of forgiveness; form habits of sobriety, regularity, and thought; accommodate yourselves to the progression of wisdom and virtue, to peace, philanthropy, and wisdom." Of such phrases, of such simples, is the printed panacea compounded; no doubt the oral

lecture repeated the same forms of speech. There is nothing taking in all this, and it did not take; the association was damned at the first representation. The poet was soon weary of the inspired and unsuccessful dream; probably, if the project had succeeded, so versatile was his nature, he would have got tired of it all the sooner. Had he founded an association, he would have started off suddenly, and have quitted in a moment, and for ever forgotten the beautiful creation. The fickle and unnatural parent, like the ostrich, would have speedily abandoned his helpless, or hopeful progeny. He had written, "I have come to this country to spare no pains, where expenditure may purchase your real benefit."

If any trading patriots, hireling and hungry agitators, attended the philanthropic meeting, supposing that the expenditure was to be of money, when they discovered that the young orator had not a shilling in his pocket, and that, therefore, nothing was to be gotten, but good advice, which they did not need, they soon withdrew themselves from the barren pursuit of pure philanthropy: and those old stagers, who deemed the wrongs of Ireland, as their own peculiar property and freehold, were jealous of an interloper, who might interfere with their long-established begging-box.

Shelley says, "Expenditure is used in my

address in a moral sense;" and his moral audience perhaps, soon perceived that such was his real meaning, and accordingly took their leave of him.

Having quickly grown tired of his hopeless scheme, Byssshe persuaded himself, that the arguments of William Godwin had persuaded him to abandon it, and to leave the country; and he readily made the old philosopher believe this; and he was much gratified and flattered by the imaginary triumph, and more firmly convinced than ever, of the absolute omnipotence of ratiocination, conducted after the method laid down in his brief tractate of "Political Justice." Whereas, this very curious correspondence proves exactly the contrary, and shows clearly, that arguments were of no avail. By ingenious sophistry the young repealer, so long as he had any taste for repeal, always avoids them with dexterity; or he resists them by setting up some fancy to serve as an excuse for not yielding to them, as, for example, his feeble health, which he urges on this occasion, as he did on many others.

"Until my marriage my life had been a series of illness; as it was of a nervous and spasmodic nature, it in a degree incapacited me for study; I nevertheless in the intervals of comparative health read romances, and those the most marvellous ones, unremittingly, and pored over the reveries of

Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus, the former of which I read in Latin, and probably gained more knowledge of that language from that source, than from all the discipline of Eton."

He had picked up at second-hand some vague notions of these reveries, but that he had ever read the writings of Albertus Magnus in Latin was a mere visionary fancy. He never possessed the works of that author, and as they fill twenty-one volumes folio, they could not be hidden under a bushel.

Whenever he was hard pressed, his poetical imagination invented the touching fable of a delicate and dangerous state of health; his robust microcosm became in an instant the theatre of dire disease; spasms, consumptions, breakings of blood-vessels, veins and arteries, crowded thickly upon him, as a pretence for undertaking what he eagerly desired, but felt to be imprudent and improper.

William Godwin was not yet personally acquainted with him; he knew nothing of his volunteer tyro, but what he had been able to gather from half-a-dozen epistles penned in a romantic, rapturous, exalted strain; otherwise he would not have felt any apprehensions of danger to himself or others to arise from his day-dreams, even when they assumed for a few hours a political character. Had he been aware how little he was prone to engage in war himself, or to be the cause of warfare in

others, he would not have likened his case to that of Robert Emmett and of the other well-hanged heroes of the Croppies' Hole. Nevertheless, the earnest and solemn warnings, albeit unnecessary, were wise and well-meant, and praise and gratitude were due for the kind and friendly intentions of his Mentor. His inspired brain, elevated and carried away by a poetic temperament, was perfectly inaccessible to reason; so long as the fit of inspiration lasted Bysshe was indocile, intractable, and unmanageable. It has been said that his friend, William Godwin, had great influence over him, and so he had; but his influence, in fact, amounted to this,—that no man could more readily persuade him to do whatever he was himself already resolved upon doing.

If Shelley had the eccentricity of a comet, he had likewise its inconceivable rapidity. From the postscript of his "Address to the Irish People," we may judge of the astonishing velocity with which he approached the sun, and then receded from it; shooting along his trajectory to come suddenly into sight, flame meteor-like across the heavens, and then as suddenly to vanish, plunging into the abyss of infinite space. It affords an amusing instance of the speed with which he arrived at his conclusions, and adopted his measures. "I have now been *a week* in Dublin, during which time I have

endeavoured to make myself more accurately acquainted with the state of the public mind on those great topics of grievances which induced me to select Ireland as a theatre, the widest and fairest, for the operations of the determined friend of religious and political freedom. The result of my observations has determined me to propose an association for the purpose of restoring Ireland to the prosperity which she possessed before the Union Act." If the obnoxious Act could have been repealed, and the pristine prosperity restored, in another week, the grievances of injured Ireland might possibly have been redressed; but if a longer time, a few days more, had been required, that sacred, winged thing, a Poet, would unquestionably have flown far away before the deep degradation could have been removed by his mediation from the Island of Saints and Virgins.

Twice—not oftener, I believe—he spoke to me of his Irish mission. On one occasion, he told me that at a meeting—probably at the meeting of Philanthropists—so much ill-will was shown towards the Protestants, that thereupon he was provoked to remark, that the Protestants were fellow Christians, fellow subjects, and as such were entitled to equal rights, to equal charity, toleration, and the rest. He was forthwith interrupted by savage yells; a tremendous uproar arose, and he was compelled to

be silent. At the same meeting, and afterwards, he was even threatened with personal violence. This unseasonable display of popish and party bigotry went far to disgust him with his rash enterprise, to open his eyes, and to convince him that Irish grievances consisted not in a denial of equal rights, these the Philanthropic Association did not seek, but the power and opportunity to tyrannize over and to oppress their Protestant brethren. The other time, he spoke of Curran, and with distaste.

Bysshe was serious, thoughtful, enthusiastic; melancholy even, with a poet's sadness: he loved to discourse gravely of matters of importance and deep concernment; the unceasing jests, perpetual farce, and profane and filthy ribaldry of the comic Master of the Rolls he found wearisome, puerile, and worse. In behaviour modest; in conversation chaste; like some pure, innocent young maiden, the gross and revolting indecency of an immoral wit wounded his sensitive nature. Moreover, the old equity judge talked of his Hibernian hearth, of an Irishman's fireside, of domestic matters, and of his own family affairs, in a way not to be repeated, and which hurt the best feelings of his meek young guest.

Shelley seldom indulged in a pleasantry, and William Godwin as seldom reported one; a jest of the former, given on the relation of the latter, is at least a rarity of facetiousness.

A dull, boring fellow, who was accustommed, as other slow-witted seekers after truth were also, to propound questions to William Godwin, and to accept his answers, when they could be extracted, as oracles, inquired one day in Shelley's presence, with all solemnity, "Pray, William Godwin, what is your opinion of love?" The oracle was silent. After a while, he who came to consult, repeated his question, "Pray, William Godwin, what is your opinion of love?" The oracle was still silent, but Shelley answered for him.

"My opinion of love is, that it acts upon the human heart precisely as a nutmeg-grater acts upon a nutmeg."

The grave inquirer heard the jesting answer with mute contempt; and presently repeated his question a third time. "Pray, William Godwin, what is your opinion of love?"

"My opinion entirely agrees with that of Mr. Shelley."

One word more of Curran,—of the witty and eloquent patriot, Curran. Certainly they are good-natured people at Liverpool; having had lodgings there—apartments, they call them—for some twenty years, since assizes have been held there, and commonly twice a year in travelling the Northern Circuit, I may truly affirm that I have invariably been treated with attention and kindness. One

summer assizes, from some retardation of the train, I arrived at my lodgings much later than the prescribed time, and therefore even more fatigued than usual with the improbity of a long journey by railway from London. Dinner was not to be thought of, so I ordered tea, and after a cup or two my spirits revived, and I boldly asked for chops. A couple of lamb chops were presently served up and eaten. Bye-and-bye, a gentle tapping at the door was heard. "Come in." The door was opened a little, and a head appeared, with the likeness of a cook's head.

"Shall you have another chop? Will I do you another chop?"

"No, I thank you, no more!"

"Were they not agreeable, then?"

"Perfectly agreeable. They were excellent; good meat, and very well dressed!"

"Oh! Botheration!" The door flew wide open, and the whole cook stood confessed. "Do you think that the niece of the Right Honourable John Philpot Curran, Master of the Rolls in Ireland, does not know how to *bryle* a chop?"

"Is your name Curran, then?"

"Sure, and it is, your honour!"

"Are you related to the late Master of the Rolls?"

"I am not in any way particularly related to him. I am just his niece!"

This was most probably a misapprehension, a mistake; genealogies are too commonly a tissue of mistakes: however, as the alleged uncle was, according to his biographer, a person of very low origin, it is just possible that the cook's pedigree was correct: I leave it to the jury.

When I first became acquainted with the Shelley family, they were evidently consanguineous; it was all, my uncle, and my aunt; my cousin this, my cousin that, and my cousin the other; my nephew and my niece: this is very amiable, certainly, and a united family is delightful. Nevertheless, consanguinity, it cannot be denied, is eminently conducive to commonplace. Bysshe fell in love at an early age,—violently, desperately in love, with a fair cousin. He formed philosophical friendships with his sisters, and enlightened his uncle, the captain: if all this addiction to his own kindred had gone on smoothly to the end, without let or hindrance; and if he had made his not ungenial father the chosen companion of his studies, and the associate in his bolder speculations,—and possibly it might have been effected,—domestic peace and felicity would have been promoted. Yet genius, originality, novelty, flights of fancy, and poetic daring would have been sadly checked,—docked and curtailed. This was not to be; all family bonds were burst and broken for ever, and his

estrangement became complete. A wise Providence leads on its favourites to grand results by paths which, to short-sighted mortals, appear rough and perilous.

The Irish dream which commenced so abruptly, being brought as abruptly to an end, the youthful dreamer awoke; then suddenly vanished, and re-appeared in Wales. He was revealed to those only whose function it was at that period to guide, or to mislead him; for my own part, I learnt nothing whatever, either of him, or of his adventures, for some time afterwards; and, until very lately, I never saw those letters from which alone my imperfect narrative of this portion of his history is drawn.

More epistles to his "venerated friend" will display what is to be known of this restless part of his life: but they are filled with the mythic tale of his early days, rather than with a detail of his actual mode of existence. We can only arrive at a general conclusion,—that it was uncomfortable. A climate wet and stormy, where the spring months are particularly cold and ungenial, is ill-adapted to promote the well-being of any man; it was especially noxious to a constitution prone to the diseases by which he believed himself to be afflicted. For solid reasons of romance, he had determined to settle, probably "for ever," in Merionethshire,—the most objectionable,

perhaps, as to weather and temperature, of the twelve objectionable counties of the Principality,—because it was feigned to have been the scene of some of the imaginary operations of the hero of one of the less popular of William Godwin's novels, and because the locality had been described by the author, who had never himself seen it.

To live in Sherwood Forest,—in merry Sherwood,—because bold Robin Hood had drawn a long bow there; to dwell at Warwick, because in that town Guy had killed the red cow; to rent a house, because Little Red Riding Hood and Hop-o-my-Thumb had peeped in at the window, and run away again,—such are the motives of enthusiasm, and they are worthy of reverence; but surely the preferences of pilgrims and crusaders may claim the like courtesy.

Although Merionethshire was the scene of Fleetwood's early life, not even temporary accommodation was to be found there, and the young wanderers had tried in vain to obtain a house at several other places. Their peregrination is spoken of with the usual poetical amplification, "We traversed the whole of North and a part of South Wales fruitlessly." They met with a residence at last, called Nantgwilt, near Rhayader, in Radnorshire, but they were not completely certain of being able to obtain it; and, in fact, they did not obtain it. Some months previously

he had spent ten days or a fortnight at the house of his cousin in the neighbourhood of Rhayader.

Bysshe's letters, addressed to myself during that visit, prove, as has been seen, that the scenery made very little impression upon him at the time, but his poetic imagination had brooded over it, and had produced this magnificent and affecting picture:

"Nantgwilt, the place where we now reside, is in the neighbourhood of scenes marked deeply on my mind by the thoughts, which possessed it, when present among them. The ghosts of these old friends have a dim and strange appearance, when resuscitated, in a situation so altered as mine is, since I felt that they were alive."

The poet and his family were dull, lonely, and uncomfortable in their cold solitude; this is proved by their anxious desire to draw others into the like painful position, and to make them partakers of the dreary delights of a romantic existence. It would have been hard to have compelled Æschylus to quit his snug garret, or attic, in Athens, and inhabit the snowy Caucasus, because, in a tragedy, he had chained Prometheus on that inhospitable mountain. It would have been not less cruel to press a London bookseller, to tear him from his frequented shop in the city and his business, to carry him off the stones and out of the sound of Bow-bell, and to force the poor fellow to stray with the hungry sheep on the

side of proud Plinlimmon, because he had rashly bestowed immortality upon that verdant region in a pretty pastoral, or by some other handicraft of the sacred sisters.

Harriet and Eliza were, no doubt, especially uneasy, the latter in particular. Harriet could employ and amuse herself with the sages and legislators of antiquity, in writing, reading, and reading aloud. But that dear Eliza! To brush the hair unceasingly, there being nobody within miles to admire it, from morn till night, even in the sweetest, loveliest seclusion; to polish everlastingly a head which did not contain one single idea, must indeed be a weary lot!

"Gracious heaven! what would Miss Warne say?"

What would she have said had she been translated from the chatty bar and the cheerful coffee-room to the vast silence that reigns amidst the scenes of Fleetwood's early life? No wonder, then, that these deserted, bewildered females were continually worrying the family of William Godwin—persons of whom they knew nothing whatever—to join them in the wilderness, being willing and desirous to take the chance of any strangers, whose presence might save them from themselves.

NANTGWILT, RHAYADER, RADNORSHIRE, SOUTH WALES,
April 25, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

At length we are in a manner settled. The difficulty of obtaining a house in Wales (like many other difficulties) is greater than I had imagined. We determined, on quitting Dublin, to settle in Merionethshire, the scene of Fleetwood's early life, but there we could find not even temporary accommodation. We traversed the whole of North and part of South Wales fruitlessly, and our peregrinations have occupied nearly all the time since the date of my last.

We are no longer in Dublin. Never did I behold in any other spot a contrast so striking as that which grandeur and misery form in that unfortunate country. How forcibly do I feel the remark which you put into the mouth of Fleetwood, that the distress which in the country humanises the heart, by its infrequency, is calculated in a city, by the multiplicity of its demands for relief, to render us callous to the contemplation of wretchedness. Surely the inequality of rank is not felt so oppressively in England. Surely something might be devised for Ireland, even consistent with the present state of politics, to ameliorate its condition. Curran at length called on me. I dined twice at his house. Curran is certainly a man of great abilities, but it

appears to me that he undervalues his powers when he applies them to what is usually the subject of his conversation. I may not possess sufficient taste to relish humour, or his incessant comicality may weary that which I possess. He does not possess that mould of mind which I have been accustomed to contemplate with the highest feelings of respect and love. In short, though Curran indubitably possesses a strong understanding and a brilliant fancy, I should not have beheld him with the feelings of admiration which his first visit excited, had he not been your intimate friend.

Nantgwilt, the place where we now reside, is in the neighbourhood of scenes marked deeply on my mind by the thoughts, which possessed it, when present among them. The ghosts of these old friends have a dim and strange appearance, when resuscitated, in a situation so altered as mine is, since I felt that they were alive. I have never detailed to you my short, yet eventful life; but when we meet, if my account be not candid, sincere, and full, how unworthy should I be of such a friend and adviser as that whom I now address! We are not yet completely certain of being able to obtain the house where now we are. It has a farm of two hundred acres, and the rent is but forty-eight pounds per annum. The cheapness, beauty, and retirement make this place in every point of view desirable.

Nor can I view this scenery,—mountains and rocks seeming to form a barrier round this quiet valley, which the tumult of the world may never overleap; the guileless habits of the Welsh,—without associating *your* presence with the idea, that of your wife, your children, and one other friend, to complete the picture which my mind has drawn to itself of felicity. Steal, if possible, my revered friend, one summer from the cold hurry of business, and come to Wales.—Adieu!

Harriet desires to join me in kindest remembrances to yourself, Mrs. G., and family. She joins also in earnest wishes that you would all visit us.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

NANTGWILT, *June* 3, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

I hasten to dissipate the unfavourable impressions you seem to have received from my silence. Mrs. Godwin, in a letter to my wife, mentions the existence of *your* letter in Ireland. This I have never been able to recover; indeed, I am confident that the date of your last was considerably anterior to the 30th of March.

My health has been far from good since I wrote to you, and I have been day after day tormented, and rendered anxious by the delay of legal business

necessary to secure this house to us. I do not say that anything can absolutely excuse any neglect to you; but the constant expectancy that the succeeding day would bring a train of thought more favourable than the present, together with your expected letter, may be permitted to palliate it.

I hope, my venerated friend, that you will soon permit the time to arrive when you may know me as I am,—when you may consult those lineaments which cannot deceive,—and be placed in a situation which will obviate the possibility of delusion.

I revert with pleasure to the latter part of your letter, and entreat you to erase from your mind the impressions which occasioned the former. They shall never, assure yourself, find occasion of renewal. Until my marriage, my life had been a series of illness, as it was of a nervous and spasmodic nature, which in a degree incapacitated me for study. I nevertheless, in the intervals of comparative health, read romances, and those the most marvellous ones, unremittingly, and pored over the reveries of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus, the former of which I read in Latin, and probably gained more knowledge of that language from that source than from all the discipline of Eton. My fondness for natural magic and ghosts abated, as my age increased. I read Locke, Hume, Reid, and whatever metaphysics came

in my way, without, however, renouncing poetry, an attachment to which has characterized all my wanderings and changes. I did not truly *think* and *feel*, however, until I read "Political Justice," though my thoughts and feelings, after this period, have been more painful, anxious, and vivid,—more inclined to action and less to theory. Before I was a republican: Athens appeared to me the model of governments; but afterwards, Athens bore in my mind the same relation to perfection that Great Britain did to Athens.

I fear that I am wanting in that mild and equable benevolence concerning which you question me; still I flatter myself that I improve; at all events, I have willingness, and "desire never fails to generate capacity." My knowledge of the chivalric age is small: do not conceive that I intend it to remain so. During my existence, I have incessantly speculated, thought, and read. A great deal of this labour has been uselessly directed; still I am willing to hope that some portion of the stores thus improvidently accumulated, will turn to account. I have just finished reading "La Système de la Nature, par M. Mirabaud." Do you know the real author? It appears to me a work of uncommon powers.

I write this to you by return of post, solicitous, as quickly as possible, to reassure you of my fidelity

and truth. I will soon write one more at length, and with answers more satisfactory to the questions in the latter part of yours.

Believe me, with sincerest respect,

Yours most truly,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

CWM-RHAYADER, *June* 11, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

I will no longer delay returning my grateful and cordial acknowledgments for your inestimable letter of March 30. That it is most affectionate and kind, I deeply feel and thankfully confess. I can return no other answer, than that I will become all that you believe and wish me to be. I should regard it as my greatest glory, should I be judged worthy to solace your declining years; it is a pleasure, the realisation of which, I anticipate with confident hopes, and which it shall be my study to deserve. I will endeavour to subdue the impatience of my nature, so incompatible with true benevolence.

I know, that genuine philanthropy does not permit its votaries to relax, even when hope appears to languish, or to indulge bitterness of feeling against the very worst, the most mistaken of men.

To these faults in a considerable degree I plead

guilty; at all events, I have now a stimulus adequate to excite me to the conquest of them.

I yet know little of the chivalric age. The ancient romances, in which are depicted the manners of those times, never fell in my way. I have read Southey's Amadis of Gaul and Palmerin of England, but at a time when I was little disposed to philosophize on the manners they describe. I have also read his Chronicle of the Cid. It is written in a simple and impressive style, and surprised me by the extent of accurate reading evinced by the references. But I read it hastily, and it did not please me, so much as it will on a reperusal, seasoned by your authority and opinion. It requires no great study to attain an intimate knowledge of Grecian and Roman history; it requires but common feeling to appreciate and acknowledge the resplendent virtues with which it is replete. The first doubts, which arise in boyish minds concerning the genuineness of the Christian religion, as a revelation from the divinity, are often excited by a contemplation of the virtues and genius of Greece and Rome. Shall Socrates and Cicero perish, whilst the meanest hind of modern England inherits eternal life?

I mean not to affirm, that this is the first argument, with which I would combat the delusions of superstition; but it certainly was one of the first

that operated to convince men, that they were delusions. What do you think of Eaton's trial and sentence? I mean not to insinuate that this poor bookseller has any characteristics in common with Socrates, or Jesus Christ, still the spirit which pillories and imprisons him, is the same which brought them to an untimely end—still, even in this enlightened age, the moralist and reformer may expect coercion analogous to that used with the humble yet zealous imitator of their endeavours. I have thought of addressing the public on the subject, and indeed have begun an outline of the address. May I be favoured with your remarks on it before I send it to the world?

We are unexpectedly compelled to quit Nantgwilt. I hope, however, before long time has elapsed, to find a home. These accidents are unavoidable to a minor. I hope wherever we are, you, Mrs. Godwin, and your children will come this summer.

I do not suppose we shall remain here longer than a week. All letters directed here will securely and certainly be forwarded. Harriet desires to join me in everything, that is respectful and affectionate to yourself, Mrs. G., and family, my venerated friend. Believe me to remain yours most sincerely,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

CHAPTER V.

On the 11th of June, 1812, they were settled in Radnorshire; but on the 5th of July, the young rovers showed themselves in North Devon, at Lynmouth, near Barnstaple: how they got there I know not. Four letters, that alone remain of the correspondence with William Godwin, supply whatever can be learned of the transactions of this period, and suggest a few remarks. It had apparently been settled in London, that they were to take the cottage of a certain Mr. Eton, a friend of Mrs. Godwin, at Lynmouth. A cottage in a region so remote perhaps was not easily to be disposed of, and they probably, according to their accustomed tenure, were to remain there for ever; to hold the undesirable cottage in fee-farm. With this arrangement they did not comply, and their wilful neglect seems to have given offence to the authorities in Skinner Street, for the "venerated friend" was more angry, than one would expect so great a philosopher could be about so small a matter. Inas-

much as, if his pupil thought, that he could promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number more effectually in a spacious mansion, where there was more elbow-room, than in citizen Eton's narrow house, where the progress of perfectibility would have been cramped and hampered, surely he was fully justified by the eternal fitness of things in choosing the former. Thus, for once at least, there was a collision between the unreal of poetry and the cant of philosophy; if the consequences of the accident were severe, they were not fatal; even Mr. Eton himself, although much hurt, survived the concussion. It rather looks as if it had been proposed to them, possibly by some of the enlightened females, whose friendship they had so precipitately sought, to journey from Rhayader to Lymouth on purpose to occupy the charming cottage; that to the first part of this reasonable proposal their complying natures yielded, and the long journey was actually performed, but that they had contumaciously refused to take the cottage, because it would not contain them.

Shelley writes: "I am, as you know, a minor, and as such depend upon a limited income, 400*l.* per annum, allowed by my relatives. Upon this income justice and humanity have many claims."

If it be correct, which is doubtful, that he had an income of 400*l.* a year,—200*l.* from his own father,

and the like sum from Harriet's father,—and it was paid regularly, the allowance, although moderate, would have been sufficient for his unostentatious, unpretending style of living, if the greater part had not been wasted on travelling expenses, and in costly flittings. The only claim that justice and humanity could possibly have upon so narrow a stipend, a strong claim no doubt, was that the recipient should live within his income, and not exceed his scanty means.

This claim poor Bysshe did not, and could not, comprehend, and there was no judicious friend at hand to undertake for him the important duty of answering it by prudence, frugality, and economy. The high and sole function of the Guardian Angel was to keep up by continual friction the due activity of the electric fluid in her rich, black hair. No domestic animal; no cat, white-mouse, or canary bird; not even the nymph Egeria, herself, was so thoroughly ignorant of and unskilled in housewifery, as the good Harriet. The queer people, with whom Bysshe inconsiderately connected himself, so far from assisting him in this great object by temperate advice and prudent example, were, for the most part, as irregular as himself, and moreover were animated by a common and eager desire to prey upon him to the utmost.

He writes, "I might, it is true, raise money on

my prospects, but the per-centage is so enormous, that it is with extreme unwillingness I should have recourse to a step, which I might then be induced to repeat, even to a ruinous frequency and extent. The involvement of my patrimony would interfere with schemes, on which it is my fondest delight to speculate."

As a part only of the correspondence remains, it is impossible to conjecture to what proposal, or suggestion, this passage may refer.

He says, that Lynouth is a beautiful place, a lovely solitude; that myrtles of an immense size twine up our cottage. It is only up the imagination of a poet, that the myrtle ever twines. He often expressed to me the most lively admiration of the Valley of Rocks near Ilfracombe; and this is all that he ever divulged respecting his residence at Lymouth; and this picturesque valley made an indelible impression upon his memory. It was not less lasting, than forcible, for during the whole of his too brief life, even until its disastrous and too early termination, it was his habit frequently to sketch, or scrawl, almost unconsciously with his pen upon the fly-leaves of books, on the backs of letters, and in note-books, and occasionally even upon the wall, or wainscot, points, spires, and pinnacles of rocks and crags, as recollections and memorials of the fascinating spot. Specimens of his rude art still

remain, and are cherished: as well as all other traces, however faint, of his frail and fugitive existence, which the Divine Poet left behind him on his abrupt and rough translation from a hard and unfeeling world!

LYMOUTH, BARNSTAPLE, *July* 5, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

I write to acknowledge the pleasure I anticipate in the perusal of some letters from you and yours, which have not yet reached us. The post comes to Lymouth but twice in a week, and some allowance is to be made for the casualties which attend an event by which we have been unexpectedly unsettled. We were all so much prepossessed in favour of Mr. Eton's house, that nothing but the invincible objection of scarcity of room would have induced us, even after seeing it, to resign the predetermination we had formed of taking it. We now reside in a small cottage, but the poverty and humbleness of the apartments is compensated for by their number, and we can invite our friends with a consciousness, that there is enclosed space, wherein they may sleep, which was not to be found at Mr. Eton's. I will, in the absence of other topics, explain to you my reason for fixing upon this residence. I am, as you know, a minor, and as such

depend upon a limited income (400*l.* per annum) allowed by my relatives. Upon this income justice and humanity have many claims, and the necessary expenses of existing in conformity to some habitudes —which may be said to be interwoven with our being—dissipate the remainder. I might, it is true, raise money on my prospects, but the per-centage is so enormous that it is with extreme unwillingness I should have recourse to a step, which I might then be induced to repeat, even to a ruinous frequency and extent. The involvement of my patrimony would interfere with schemes on which it is my fondest delight to speculate. I may truly, therefore, be classed generically with those minors who pant for twenty-one, though I trust that the specific difference is very, very wide. The expenses incurred by the failure of our attempt, in settling at Nantgwilt have rendered it necessary for us to settle for a time in some cheap residence, in order to recover our pecuniary independence. I will still hope that you and your estimable family will, before much time has elapsed, become inmates of our house. This house boasts not such accommodations as I should feel satisfied in offering you, but I will propose a plan which, if it meets your approbation, may prove an interlude to our meeting, and become an earnest, that much time will not elapse before its occurrence. I have a friend; but first I will make you

in some measure acquainted with her. She is a woman with whom her excellent qualities made me acquainted. Though deriving her birth from a very humble source, she contracted, during youth, a very deep and refined habit of thinking; her mind, naturally inquisitive and penetrating, overstepped the bounds of prejudice, she formed for herself an unbeaten path of life.

By the patronage of a lady, whose liberality of mind is singular, this woman at the age of twenty was enabled to commence the conduct of a school. She concealed not the uncommon modes of thinking, which she had adopted, and publicly instructed youth as a Deist and a Republican. When I first knew her, she had not read Political Justice, yet her life appeared to me in a great degree modelled upon its precepts. Such is the woman, who is about to become an inmate of our family. She will pass through London, and I shall take the liberty of introducing to you one whom I do not consider unworthy of the advantage. As soon as we recover our financial liberty, we mean to come to London. Why may not Fanny come to Lymouth with her and return with us all to London in the autumn? I entreat you to look with a favourable eye upon this request, and indeed our hearts long for a personal intercourse with those to whom they are devoted; yet I fear, from the tenor of Mrs. G.'s

letter, that we must give up the hope of seeing you. This disappointed hope determines us to journey to London *as soon as we can*. This place is beautiful, it equals—Harriet says it exceeds —Nantgwilt. Mountains certainly of not less perpendicular elevation than 1000 feet are broken abruptly into valleys of indescribable fertility and grandeur. The climate is so mild, that myrtles of an immense size twine up our cottage, and roses blow in the open air in winter. In addition to these is the sea, which dashes against a rocky and caverned shore, presenting an ever-changing view. All "shows of sky and earth, of sea and valley," are here. Adieu! Believe how devotedly and sincerely I must now remain yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

I write this letter by return of post, and send purposely to Barnstaple. I have *more* to say, but will reserve it until I receive the letters which are on the way.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

LYMOUTH, *July* 7, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

The person whom I sent yesterday to the post-town has returned. He brought those letters from you and yours, which have been forwarded from Cwm Elan to Chepstow.

It is a singular coincidence, that in my last letter I entered into details respecting my mode of life, and unfolded to you the reasons by which I was induced, on being disappointed in Mr. Eton's house, to seek an unexpensive retirement. I feel my heart throb exultingly when, as I read the misgivings of your mind concerning my rectitude, I reflect that I have to a certain degree refuted them by anticipation. My letter, dated the 5th, will prove to you that it is not to live in splendour, which I hate,—*not* to accumulate indulgences, which I despise, that my present conduct was adopted. Most unworthy, indeed, should I be of that high destiny which he, who is your friend and pupil, must share, if I was not myself practically a proselyte to that doctrine, by promulgating which with unremitting zeal and industry I have become the object of hatred and suspicion.

Our *cottage*—for such, not nominally, but really, it is—exceeds not in its accommodations the dwellings of the peasantry which surround it. Its beds are of the plainest, I may say the coarsest materials, and from the single consideration, that accommodations for personal convenience were glaringly defective, did I refrain in my last letter from pressing the request, whose concession is nearest to my desires, that *you* would come to this lovely solitude, and bring to a conclusion that state of acquaintance

which stands between us, to a *perfect* intimacy. I was beginning a sentence in the middle of the second page of my letter, in which I should have pressed you to come *here*, when Harriet interrupted me, bade me consider that your health was delicate, that our rooms were complete *servants' rooms*. I finished the sentence, as it stands. She added, that we would hasten our journey to London, and that *you all* should live with us. It was the thought of the moment; I send it you without comment, as it arose. See my defence. Yet, my esteemed and venerated friend, accept my thanks;—consider yourself as yet more beloved by me, for the manner in which you have reproved my suppositionary errors; and ever may you, like the tenderest and wisest of parents, be on the watch to detect those traits of vice which, yet undiscovered, are nevertheless marked on the tablet of my character, so that I pursue undeviatingly the path which you first cleared through the wilderness of life.

I said, in my last letter, that there are certain habitudes in conformity to which it is almost necessary that persons, who have contracted them, should exist. By this I do not mean that a splendid mansion, or an equipage, is in any degree essential to life; but that if I was employed at the loom, or the plough, and my wife in culinary business and housewifery, we should, in the present state of

society, quickly become very different beings, and, I may add, less useful to our species. Nor, consistently with invincible ideas of delicacy, can two persons of opposite sexes, unconnected by certain ties, sleep in the same apartment. Probably, in a regenerated state of society, agriculture and manufacture would be compatible with the most powerful intellect and most polished manners;—probably delicacy, as it relates to sexual distinction, would disappear;—yet now, a plough-boy can with difficulty acquire refinement of intellect; and promiscuous sexual intercourse, under the present system of thinking, would inevitably lead to consequences the most injurious to the happiness of mankind. Mr. Eton's house had not sufficient bed-rooms, *scarcely* sufficient for ourselves, and you and your family must sleep, for, my dear friend, believe me that I would not willingly take a house for any time, whither you could not come. Have I written desultorily? Is my explanation of habitudes incorrect, or indistinct? Pardon me, for I am anxious to lose no time in communicating my sentiments.

Harriet is writing to Fanny; if she is particular in her invitation of Fanny, it is not meant exclusively. There are a sufficient quantity of bed-rooms; and if the humbleness of their quality is no objection, I need not say,—Come, thou vene-

rated and excellent friend, and make us happy.—Adieu!

Believe me, with the utmost sincerity and truth,

Ever yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

(Single sheet.) To Mr. William Godwin, London.

MY DEAR SHELLEY,

Our acquaintance is a whimsical, and, to a certain degree, anomalous one. I have never seen your face,—

> "Your face, my Thane, is as a book, where men
> May read strange matters,"

and till I have seen a man's face, I may say, in good sooth, I do not know him. Would that this whimsical and anomalous state of our acquaintance were brought to a conclusion!

Deprived, therefore, as I have hitherto been, of the legitimate way of reading your character, and diving into your heart, I am reduced to collect traits of your character, one by one, as I can, as they offer themselves in your correspondence. I am half afraid I have got a glimpse of a new one—that, perhaps, I may not altogether approve—this day:—

The postman this morning brought a letter, directed to Mr. Eton, at Mrs. Godwin's. The circumstance

was an awkward one. Our family have been taught by yourself and Mrs. Shelley to be anxious about the place where you shall fix your abode. The moment what I may now call the well-known hand was seen, all the females were on the tiptoe to know.

Well! Do they take this nice cottage, near Tintern Abbey and Piercefield? It seemed idle, too, that we should be kept in ignorance of your determination. There could, I thought, be no secrets between you and Mr. Eton. I therefore ventured to open the letter. Mrs. Godwin will write a line to Mr. Eton in the course of the day, telling him that you decline his house. I am a little astonished, however, with the expression in your letter, that "the insufficiency of house-room is a vital objection." This would sound well to Mr. Eton from the eldest son of a gentleman of Sussex, with an ample fortune. But to me, I own, it a little alarms me. Observe, however, that I know nothing of Mr. Eton's house. It may be of the dimension of a pig-sty; nor is it my habit to reason directly to a particular case: the bent of my mind's eye is always to a general principle.

One thing more, by way of preliminary. You love *frankness*, and you honour *me*; but when this frankness proceeds to unreserve and unceremoniousness in my person, will you bear that?

Your family consists of yourself, a very young

wife, and a sister. Yourself, as I conceived, a plain, philosophical republican, loving your species very much, and caring very little for the accumulation of personal indulgences,—Tell me, how much of truth there is in this picture ?

The Enquiry concerning Political Justice may, unknown to me, be a mass of false principles and erroneous conclusions; to me it appears otherwise: there is one principle that lies at the basis of that book: "I am bound to employ my talents, my understanding, my strength, and my time, for the production of the greatest quantity of general good. I have no right to dispose of a shilling of my property at the suggestion of my caprice." There is no principle, as it appears to me, more fundamental to a just morality than this last. Not only property and money are most essential for promoting the good of others; but he that misuses these undermines all the good qualities he might otherwise have. He may say, indeed, he will employ his faculties and efforts for the general good, but if in the mean time he lives, like a farmer-general, he is a wofully deficient character. The very act of having no conscience in the expenditure of his money, and pampering all his whims, will corrupt his understanding and taint his benevolence. It is in this point of view that the Apostle says well, "He that offends in one point is guilty in all."

But you, my dear Shelley, have special motives for wariness in this matter. You are at variance with your father, and I think you say in one of your letters, that he allows you only 200*l.* a year. If by unnecessary and unconscientious expense you heap up embarrassments at present, how much do you think that will embitter your days and shackle your powers hereafter? I wish to see you a free man, when you shall come of age, and when at whatever time that may arrive, you shall be, the minister, in the name and on the behalf of your species, of a considerable property. Prudence, too, a just and virtuous prudence, in this most essential point, the dispensation of property, will do much to make you and your father friends; and why should you not be friends?

Forgive the freedom of this expostulation: you must see, that I am not playing the part of a peevish and presumptuous censor, but endeavouring to revive in you, if they need to be revived, great principles, without which a man can never be a worthy, a meritorious member of the great commonwealth of mankind.

Believe me, my dear Shelley, with the warmest wishes for your prosperity and happiness, your sincere friend,

W. Godwin.

LYMOUTH, *July* 29, 1812.

MY DEAR GODWIN,

I have never seen you, and yet I think, I know you; I think I knew you even before I ever heard from you, whilst yet it was a question with me, whether you were living or dead. It has appeared to me, that there are lineaments in the soul, as well as in the face; lineaments, too, less equivocal and deceptive, than those which result from mere physical organisation. This opinion may be illusory, if I find it so, it shall be retracted. You say, three letters of yours have been unanswered. I waited to know, whether those of mine contained any topics worthy of notice, or discussion. I find they do not; therefore, let us pass on.

To begin with Helvetius. I have read Le Système de la Nature, and suspect this to be Helvetius's by your charges against it. It is a book of uncommon powers, yet too obnoxious to accusations of sensuality and selfishness. Although, like you, an irreconcileable enemy to the system of self-love, both from a feeling of its deformity and a conviction of its falsehood, I can by no means conceive how the loftiest disinterestedness is incompatible with the strictest materialism. In fact the doctrine, which affirms that there is no such thing as matter, and that which affirms that all is matter, appear to me perfectly

indifferent in the question between benevolence and self-love. I cannot see how they interfere with each other, or why the two doctrines of materialism and disinterestedness cannot be held in one mind as independently of each other, as the two truths, that a cricket-ball is round and a box square. Immateriality seems to me nothing but a simple denial of the presence of matter, of the presence of all the forms of being with which our senses are acquainted, and it surely is somewhat inconsistent to assign real existence to what is a mere negation of all that actual world to which our senses introduce us.

I have read Berkeley, and the perusal of his arguments tended more than anything to convince me, that immaterialism, and other words of general usage, deriving all their force from mere predicates in *non*, were invented by the pride of philosophers to conceal their ignorance, even from themselves. If I err in what I say, or if I differ from you, though in this point I think I do not, reason stands arbiter between us. Reason, if I may be permitted to personify it, is as much your superior, as you are mine. An hour and a thousand years are equally incommensurate with eternity. With respect to Helvetius's opinion of the omnipotence of education, *there* I submit to your authority, because authority, derived from experience such as yours, is reason. I will

own, that the opinion of Helvetius, until very lately, has been mine.

You know that in most points I agree with you. As I see you in "Political Justice," I agree with you. Your "Enquirer" is replete with speculations, in which I sympathize, yet the arguments there in favour of classical learning failed to remove all my doubts on that point. I am not sufficiently vain and dogmatical to say that *now* I have *no* doubts on the deleteriousness of classical education; but it certainly is my opinion — nor has your last letter sufficed to refute it — that the evils of acquiring Greek and Latin considerably overbalance the benefit. But why, because I think so, should it even be supposed necessary by you to warn me against fearing that *you feel displeasure.* Assure yourself that the picture of you in the retina of my intellect is a standing proof to me, that its original is capable of extending to opinions the most unlimited toleration, and that he will scan with disgust nothing but a defect of the heart. Let Reason, then, be arbiter between us. Yet sometimes I am struck with dismay when I consider that, placed where you are, high up on the craggy mountain of knowledge, you will scarcely condescend to doubt, even sufficiently for the purposes of discussion, that opinion which you hold, although by that doubting you might fit me for following your footsteps. Yet

I will explain my reasons for doubting the efficacy of classical learning as a means of forwarding the interests of the human race.

In the first place, I do not perceive how one of the truths of "Political Justice" rests on the excellence of ancient literature. That Latin and Greek have contributed to form your character it were idle to dispute, but in how great a degree have they contributed? Are not the reasonings on which your system is founded utterly distinct from and unconnected with the excellence of Greece and Rome? Was not the government of republican Rome, and most of those of Greece, as oppressive and arbitrary, as liberal of encouragement to monopoly, as that of Great Britain is at present? And what do we learn from their poets? As you have yourself acknowledged somewhere, "they are fit for nothing but the perpetuation of the noxious race of heroes in the world." Lucretius forms, perhaps, the single exception. Throughout the whole of their literature runs a vein of thought similar to that, which you have so justly censured in Helvetius. Honour—and the opinion either of contemporaries, or more frequently of posterity—is set so much above virtue as, according to the last words of Brutus, to make it nothing but an empty name. Their politics sprang from the same narrow and corrupted source. Witness the interminable aggressions between each

other of the states of Greece; the thirst of conquest with which even republican Rome desolated the earth;—they are our masters in politics, because we are so immoral as to prefer self-interest to virtue, and expediency to positive good. You say that words will neither debauch our understandings, nor distort our moral feelings. You say that the time of youth could not be better employed than in the acquisition of classical learning. But *words* are the very things that so eminently contribute to the growth and establishment of prejudice: the learning of *words* before the mind is capable of attaching correspondent ideas to them, is like possessing machinery with the use of which we are so unacquainted as to be in danger of misusing it. But words are merely signs of ideas. How many evils, and how great evils, spring from annexing inadequate and improper ideas to words! The words honour, virtue, duty, goodness, are examples of this remark. Besides, we only want one distinct sign for one idea. Do you not think that there is much more danger of our wanting ideas for the signs of them already made, than of our wanting these signs for inexpressible ideas? I should think that natural philosophy, medicine, astronomy, and, above all, history, could be sufficient employments for immaturity; employments which would completely fill up the era of tutelage, and render unnecessary

all expedients for losing time well by gaining it safely.

Of the Latin language, as a grammar, I think highly. It is a key to the European languages, and we can hardly be said to know our own without first attaining a complete knowledge of it. Still, I cannot help considering it as an affair of minor importance, inasmuch as the science of things is superior to the science of words. Nor can I help considering the vindicators of ancient learning,—I except you, not from politeness, but because you, unlike them, are willing to subject your opinions to reason,—as the vindicators of a literary despotism; as the tracers of a circle which is intended to shut out from real knowledge, and to which this fictitious knowledge is attached, all who do not breathe the air of prejudice, or who will not support the established systems of politics, religion, and morals. I have as great a contempt for Cobbett as you can have, but it is because he is a dastard and a time-server; he has no humanity, no refinement; but were he a classical scholar, would he have more? Did Greek and Roman literature refine the soul of Johnson? Does it extend the views of the thousand narrow bigots educated in the very bosom of classicality? But

> "in publica commoda peccem
> Si longo sermone morer tua tempora,"

says Horace at the commencement of his longest letter:

Well, adieu! All join in kindest love to your amiable family, of whom I have forgotten to speak, but not to think; and I remain,

Very truly and affectionately yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. W. Godwin, London.

CHAPTER VI.

SHELLEY'S last extant letter to William Godwin from Lymouth is dated the 29th of July. I have two other letters from Lymouth, the last bears date the 18th of August. These are addressed to a person in London, who was possibly an acquaintance of his wife's family, but not, I believe, of himself at that time. They do not furnish any picture of his mode of life, and are not, therefore, of any particular interest; but the statement of a few facts is not unworthy of notice.

Bysshe writes on the 29th of July, that he had just printed, in London, his letter concerning the trial of D. I. Eaton (of which hereafter) for private distribution, but that he did not intend to publish it. He says:—"I have several works, some unfinished, some yet only in contemplation. They are principally in the form of poems, or essays." And he requests, that Milton's Prose Works, Sir Humphrey Davy's Elements of Chemical Philosophy, Hartley on Man, and The Rights of Woman

by Mary Wolstonecraft, may be sent to him immediately.

In his letter of the 18th of August to the same person he writes thus :—"I have procured a copy of a work from America. It developes the actual state of republicanised Ireland; and it appears to me to be above all things calculated to remove the prejudices, which have been too long cherished, of that oppressed country, and to strike the oppressors with dismay. I enclose also two pamphlets which I printed and distributed whilst in Ireland some months ago, no bookseller daring to publish them; they were on that account attended with only partial success." It would have been more correct and more candid to have said, that the pamphlets had no success in Dublin. "I shall, if possible, prepare a volume of Essays, moral and religious, by November; but all my MSS. now being in Dublin, and from peculiar circumstances not immediately obtainable, I do not know whether I can. I enclose also, by way of specimen, all that I have written of a little poem, begun since my arrival in England; I conceive I have matter enough for six more cantos. You will perceive I have not attempted to temper my constitutional enthusiasm in that poem. Indeed, a poem is safe; an iron-souled prosecutor would scarcely dare to attack 'genus irritabile vatum.' The past, the present, and the future are

the grand and comprehensive topics of this poem. I have not yet half exhausted the second of them." He says, that he had read "The Empire of the Nairs," by the Chevalier Lawrence, and also the prolusions of some other liberal philosophers of the day; and the letter concludes with these words:—"I am about translating an *old* French work, professedly by a M. Mirabaud, not the famous one, 'Le Système de la Nature.' Do you know anything of it?"

This projected translation was not completed, probably it was never commenced; the System of Nature was hardly of sufficient standing to be styled 'an *old* French work.' The inchoate poem, of which a specimen was enclosed, is believed to have been the celebrated Queen Mab of the Divine Poet.

The ordinary fate of Shelley's writings was much like that of the Sibylline leaves; they were blown about, at the mercy of every wind, into holes and corners the most remote and devious. His MSS. not immediately obtainable, but from which in three short months a volume of moral and religious Essays was to proceed, he had, under peculiar circumstances, left behind him in Dublin.

Similar was the fortune of his letters; these he often either lost himself soon after they were written, or caused others to lose for him. How

large and how charming a volume would those letters alone compose, which he wrote to myself and I never received!

So was it also with his books. A large share of his scanty income, amounting in the whole to a considerable sum during some fifteen years that he was constantly a purchaser, was always expended upon books; so that, wherever he happened to be, he was commonly in possession of a tolerable library, comprising several choice works. I used to think him extremely lucky in buying books, for he frequently picked up a rare and valuable author at a very moderate price; or, to do him justice, I should perhaps rather say, that he was active, observant, and intelligent in such purchases, as he was in all other matters.

When he changed his residence, and he often changed it—too often, indeed—he hastily chose some new domicile, where he resolved to remain "for ever"; thither his books were at once despatched, but with so wild a precipitance, and such head-long hurry, that ancients and moderns alike missed their way. And when he, on the spur of the moment, quitted his eternal abode, as he was wont, the books were left behind to follow him to his lately elected and perpetual home: but they sometimes remained unheeded.

He had a good library expecting his return in a

cottage at Killarney; and at I know not how many other places in the British Isles, and in other states of Europe. I have many times thought, what an excellent collection of valuable books the poor poet would have owned, if all his different libraries, scattered about in distant localities, had been brought together under one roof and in one large room.

To lend Bysshe a book was to bid it a long farewell, to take leave of it for ever; and, indeed, the pain of parting was often spared, for he bore away silently, reading it as he went, any work that caught his attention.

I have always possessed many books, the true riches of a scholar, and I have felt a certain weakness towards them; but if my books were dear to me, my incomparable friend was far dearer; he was most welcome, and more than welcome, to them, as to all besides, that I ever had: yet I have now and then permitted myself to regret, that he had deprived me of some favourite volume, only that he might presently lose it.

How much longer than the 18th of August, the date of the last remaining letter from Lymouth, the juvenile party tarried there in their sweet seclusion, is not known; nor why, or how, they left that remote retirement; or whither they betook themselves. It should seem, that they departed very

abruptly, after their fashion, and without communicating their hasty determination even to those favoured persons who were at that period in the fullest enjoyment of their entire confidence, such as it was, to the "venerated friend and his amiable family;" inasmuch as William Godwin himself, as I discovered casually some years afterwards, for the lesion of philosophy was too cruel ever to be alluded to by any of the parties concerned, was hoaxed and regularly bitten in a most provoking and truly laughable manner. By dint of urgent and often reiterated invitations, he was at last persuaded and pressed into the service; and he made up his mind to pay a visit to his unseen, unknown friend, his affectionate, obedient, admiring, and devoted pupil; to try his fortune in Devonshire, and to take pot-luck at Lymouth.

Rashly relying on their assurances, and looking forward confidently to a warm reception, to be heartily welcomed and made perfectly comfortable, he took an inside place by the coach to Barnstaple. The reverend Mentor entrusted himself and his old-fashioned portmanteau to the heavy, lumbering vehicle, slowly rolled onwards towards the west of England, and after a long and tedious journey, he came at last to Lymouth, wearied and exhausted, poor man, but full of good hopes of finding at once rest, refreshment, and rapturous sympathy.

The worn-out patriarch of modern philosophy, to his no small astonishment and utter dismay, found, that the house was shut up and the birds flown; his most addicted disciples had taken themselves off suddenly, and no man knew whither. There were no tidings, no traces, of their route! Nothing was left for him but to return to Skinner-street by the way he came; but this could not be effected every day. Twice, or at the most, thrice, in the week did the six-inside coach plough its reluctant course to town. The bewildered author of the "Essay on Sepulchres" secured his seat, and reposed himself at his own charge in the inn, pondering in unphilosophical, unpoetic, unenviable loneliness how he might reconcile such flighty proceedings with the great social principles laid down so plainly in his immortal "Enquiry concerning Political Justice;" and drawing up, for the instruction of his amiable family on his return, a verbal process of the astounding neglect which he had experienced.

It would have been curious and amusing to have listened to the narrative of the disappointed and bubbled traveller giving the details of this specimen of human perfectibility. In addition to his other annoyances, it was related, that the much enduring man, relying upon the liberality of his devoted admirers, had not brought with him sufficient funds to take him home again, and therefore

he found himself short of money in a land of strangers.

It is necessary to return to myself for a little while, and briefly to tell the simple story of my own uniform life, in order to follow the tangled thread of the Divine Poet's multiform and ever varying existence.

When my young friends betook themselves so hastily to Keswick, they left me behind at York, as has been already related; and I incurred their displeasure, to a certain extent, by refusing to join them, notwithstanding their repeated and importunate solicitations. It was on all accounts inexpedient, and indeed impossible, to relinquish my professional education. After they quitted Cumberland, I received no more letters, and I did not know how to address them. Both Bysshe and Harriet wrote to me from Ireland, and also from Wales, as I was afterwards informed; but not one of their letters came into my hands. I led a quiet, regular life, in the quiet old city, punctually attending the chambers of my worthy conveyancer every day, and remaining with him until the hour of dinner, six o'clock, when the place was shut up, there being no attendance in the evening. I drew whatever was required to be drawn by me,—marriage settlements, mortgages, wills, agreements, and the various deeds by which land is transferred, with

dull, vulgar, and tiresome prolixity. I copied a thick volume in quarto of precedents, and I read the works, for the most part confused and ill-written, in which a branch of the law of England, certainly not extensive, nor indeed difficult in itself, is rendered perplexed, and sometimes unintelligible. The most profound ignorance is the specific difference, and the grand, unenviable distinction of the English lawyer—an animal too often drawn from the dregs of society,—and the place of the real property lawyer, is commonly at the bottom of this low scale. The conveyancer is usually some damaged article,—not mērely a vessel of dishonour, moulded out of the coarsest clay into the rudest and most awkward form, but a piece spoiled in baking besides,—a cracked pitcher, deformed in person and disfigured, ridiculous through an impediment in his speech, or by some broad provincial dialect, hardly to be understood by hedgers and ditchers; too vulgar for any judicial appointment, and moreover a rip, found on trial not to be respectable enough for an attorney. Hence arises the pernicious ascendency—the omnipotence, in truth—of low connections and low arts, and the absolute impossibility, so long as this state of things continues, of a thorough reform of the law, and of the mode of transfer of real property in England. A scholar and a gentleman would be the master of his clients, and would be able to overrule

and to silence all futile and interested objections to perspicuity and simplicity in dealings with land; but a mean and ignorant fellow must of necessity be the very humble servant and slave of the attorneys, who, in consideration of his entire and devoted subserviency, are pleased to give him business and bread; and to keep him out of the stone-yard and from the road-side, for which a wise Providence originally designed him.

I commonly gave up my evenings to humanising studies; to the advancement of my general education, which had been so rudely, illegally, and insolently interrupted by the petty despots of my University. I had brought my books with me from Oxford, and I went through several Greek and Latin authors with careful and scrupulous attention.

Sometimes, however, I partook of the kind hospitality of the good-natured and sociable inhabitants of the ancient city. On Sunday, when the day was not unfavourable, I bestowed a thought on my health, and I kept up my natural vigour by stretching out boldly across the fine plain, which encompasses York on all sides, and accomplishing on foot, a round of twenty, or thirty miles. In addition to the most salutary effects of robust exercise, the exertions of an attentive observer are usually rewarded by some object worthy of his notice; he sees some uncommon plant, or bird, or insect, and

there are few old churches, however humble, which do not afford some interesting peculiarity of structure, or some memorial of past ages.

Having completed my proposed residence of a year in York, and taken the first step in my professional education, I removed to London. I entered as a student in the Middle Temple, and was doomed to eat in the noble Hall, but happily during term only, that is to say, for about a third part of the year, bad dinners in worse company. There were a few young men amongst my fellow-students, whose society was not displeasing, and we contrived to dine at the same table. This desirable object was effected by coming into the hall betimes, and performing certain ceremonies, the precise nature of which I have forgotten; sticking forks into pieces of bread, I think, was the principal charm. By such means we succeeded in keeping at a distance the future occupants of high legal offices; creatures stinking with filthy odours, stinking with vulgarity, and in every respect unfit to associate with gentlemen. These, the coming ornaments of the legal profession, all young men who had been decently brought up shunned as a pestilence. Rare Ben Jonson, some two centuries ago, dedicated "Every Man out of his Humour," "to the noblest nurseries of humanity and liberty in the kingdom, the Inns of Court."

Nobody, nowadays, has a good word for these places; they must take a new start, or be sold up. Moreover, on my arrival in London, I enlisted with a special pleader, and fought manfully under his inky banners. In some respects this study, or rather this vulgar and barbarous praxis, resembled the pursuits of the preceding year, in others it was widely different. Before, we had been drowsy, and well nigh asleep; now, we were always in a hurry; this seemed still more preposterous, and certainly less gentlemanlike, than the lethargy of the former year. Dispatch was prayed,—earnestly prayed, —most earnestly prayed. When can I have it? The question had never been asked at York! At first, I believe, I was one of two pupils, but shortly I became one of six. We were all persons of good principles, high tories,—the master and his disciples, with the exception of one man, who sometimes made a noise on behalf of Sir Francis Burdett, the most successful performer of the day in his particular line; having stated his thesis to us, the obstreperous young patriot supported it by the best arguments that can be used on that side of the question,—by whistling and singing the popular tunes of the French revolution, and beating time on his desk with a ruler. We thought the noisy champion of freedom a very foolish fellow, and such indeed he was; and eventually

even his friend, Sir Francis, left him in the lurch, and came over to our party, turning into a fine old English gentleman, like ourselves. At the chambers of a special pleader, a greater amount of attendance was required than with a conveyancer; it was necessary to go thither after dinner, and sometimes to remain late; at least in and about term, that is for half the year, or more; and in fact the evening was the busiest part of the day. I attended very closely during the three years assigned to this state of pupilage. I drew a prodigious mass of pleadings, and copied many thick volumes of precedents, and read many treatises and reports; the employment was sufficiently dull and unintellectual, and there was no lack of tautology, but in this respect pleadings did not equal the uncouth and barbarous tautology of deeds.

The odious and stupid slavery, and perverse and absurd mode of learning common law, consumed in a miserable manner nearly the whole of my time, leaving but little for amusement, and, what I deeply deplored, for more humane studies. Nevertheless, I contrived to visit the theatres occasionally, to go sometimes into society, and to set apart a few hours for the classical authors of Greece and Rome; there are refreshment and relaxation in a change of studies.

A residence in London became soon exceedingly

agreeable to me, and it has always been so; a spare hour may be employed with pleasure and profit in a capital city; in the country and in a provincial town there are not equal facilities for making leisure fruitful. Access may readily be obtained to books and other aids to learning, which are not approachable elsewhere; and it is possible to cultivate the acquaintance of men of accomplishments and acquirements, and to associate with persons of both sexes distinguished by various talents. The long vacation notwithstanding was an invaluable relief, a complete renovation, the germ of a new life; to visit the country during the pleasantest part of the year, —the autumn,—to ride, to shoot, to study, at entire ease, and according to one's good pleasure, was a delightful change; to burn many pounds of powder, and to read many goodly volumes of Greek.

I had returned from the country at the end of October, 1812, and had resumed the duties of a pleader; I was sitting in my quiet lodgings with my tea and a book before me: it was one evening at the beginning of November, probably about ten o'clock. I was roused by a violent knocking at the street door, as if the watchman was giving the alarm of fire; some one ran furiously up-stairs, the door flew open, and Bysshe rushed into the middle of the room. I had not seen him for a year; not since they left me at York. I had not

heard from him, nor indeed any tidings of him, for many months; not once after his departure from Keswick. I made several fruitless attempts to find out what had become of him soon after I came to reside in London the last spring.

The civil and obliging Mr. Graham had unfortunately quitted his lodgings, and the people could not tell me where he was; he could have given me at once the information, which I so ardently desired. I called in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and I saw the elder of the cousins, the younger and more communicative one had gone to Edinburgh to study medicine. I had a very cold reception; of Bysshe he either knew, or chose to know, nothing.

It was evident there was a screw loose; he gave me no encouragement to call again, nothing, it was plain, was to be made of him, and I have never seen him since.

From this untoward sample it was conspicuously of no use to address myself to any other members of his family, or to their agents; the poor Poet was a prohibited book, closely sealed up and put away to be out of sight, and indeed out of mind. There was nothing to be done but to draw pleas, to keep terms, and to bide my time.

The time had now come suddenly and unexpectedly. Bysshe looked, as he always looked, wild, intellectual, unearthly; like a spirit that had just

descended from the sky; like a demon risen at that moment out of the ground.

How had he found me out? I could never have discovered his hiding-place; in truth I had often tried in vain. He knew of my intention to become a law-student; he had been at the Treasury in Lincoln's Inn; they sent him to the Temple. I had dined that day in the Hall of the Middle Temple, and from thence they dispatched him to my special pleader, and he, with considerable hesitation, gave him my address.

The next morning this gentleman said to me, not without a certain trepidation:

"You had just left chambers last night, when a very wild-looking man came here, and asked for you—he must see you instantly. He was in a great hurry; he must see you. He required your address; I doubted, whether I ought to give it him, for he would not tell me his name. Leave your own name and a written direction; Mr. Hogg will be here in the morning, he will see it, and if he pleases, he can call upon you; but he would not agree to this: he must see you immediately. My clerk thought, that in a frequented part of London there could not be much danger, so I permitted him, though rather unwillingly, to write down your lodgings, and at last I gave it him. Did you see him? I hope he did not do you any harm."

Bysshe did not approve of the caution of the prudent pleader; next day, when I told him of his suspicions, he exclaimed, "Like all lawyers, he is a narrow-minded fool! How can you bear the society of such a wretch? The old fellow looked at me, as if he thought I was going to cut his throat; the clerk was rather better, but he is an ass!" He had ten thousand things to tell me, and as he told me a thousand at least of them at a time without order, and with his natural vehemence and volubility, I got only a very indistinct notion of his history during the preceding year; I picked up a few facts afterwards, many more very recently, but even at this moment I can trace only an imperfect narrative of this portion of his life. I learned that he had been in Ireland, in Wales, and in other places; that was nearly all which I could then make out. He eagerly asked me innumerable questions, but he seldom heard, or waited for, my answers. He was soon coming to reside in London—to stay there "for ever;" so we should never be separated again. He stayed late, and would have remained conversing with me all night, but I took him by the arm, and led him down stairs and into the street, that the people of the house, who began to show their uneasiness, might go to bed; for my landlord was a judge's clerk, and kept good hours. I promised at parting to dine with him

the next day. I should see Harriet, who had much to tell me.

Accordingly, on the morrow at six o'clock, in some hotel very near to St. James's Palace, I found in a sitting-room high up in the house Eliza, who smiled faintly upon me in silence, and Harriet, who received me cordially and with much shaking of hands. "It really seemed as if we were never to meet more! What a separation! But it will never occur again, for we are coming to live in London."

"You are looking surprising well, Harriet!" And so she was, and in the full bloom of radiant health.

"Oh no, poor dear thing," said Eliza, feebly, "her nerves are in a fearful state; most dreadfully shattered."

I took a seat, and conversed a little while with the bright and nervous beauty. Harriet then produced a large sheet of thick paper, printed on one side only, and with an engraving at the top, much like an Oxford Almanack, and handed it to me with a certain unction, as if it were something sacred and full of edification. I looked at it in a cursory way. The letterpress was a report of the trial of Robert Emmett; the engraving represented a court of justice with the usual accompaniments. The principal figure was the unfortunate young man; he was standing at the bar and addressing the bench, vainly endeavouring to charm two deaf adders, Baron

George and Baron Daly, and to persuade them to feel commiseration for, if not sympathy with, high treason. When I had looked at the paper a short time, the good Harriet asked me, not without emotion, "Well, what do you think? Do not you pity him? Poor young man!"—"Not the least in the world!" "What do you think of it?" The paper was filled for the most part with the speech of the prisoner. I had read formerly a fuller report of Emmett's trial. "I think the sooner all such rascals are hanged the better!" Eliza eyed me with calm contempt, with mute languid disgust.

"Yes, it is just like you!" Harriet ejaculated. "You are so horribly narrow-minded! So terribly unfeeling!"

Presently Bysshe came thundering up stairs from the street, like a cannon-ball, and we had dinner. After dinner the Poet spoke of Wales with enthusiasm. I was to come and see it. He talked rapturously of the waterfalls, walking about the room and gesticulating as he described them. What effect they had upon him when they were actually present before his eyes I know not; the recollection of them absent filled him with wonder and ecstacy in St. James's Street. Soon after tea Eliza said, they must go and pack up; they were to set out for Wales early next morning, and she trembled for poor dear Harriet's nerves!

A few shabby, ill-printed books, productions of the Irish press, were lying about the room; they treated of the history of Ireland, and of the affairs of that country. Bysshe did not say a word about Ireland; on the contrary, when I took up an ill-favoured volume, and remarked, what a shockingly printed book, it is hardly legible; he gently drew it out of my hands, closed it, and laid it aside. He spoke on two subjects only; his project to come and reside in London, when we should be always with each other, and should read together every book that was ever written by man; and about the Welsh waterfalls, which I was soon to visit in company with him; and some day we must take a look at the falls of Niagara. The lovely Eliza in her languishing manner whispered to her sister, that a certain Mrs. Madocks was a most delightful creature; and she had named in the course of the evening, more than once, with faint rapture, some Mr. Madocks, as the benefactor of the human species. Bysshe also informed me in confidence, that Mr. Madocks, of Tremadoc, was the true Prince of Wales, being the lineal descendant and heir-at-law of that Prince Madoc, who had been immortalised in a never-dying epic by the immortal Robert Southey. No doubt the worthy squire by genealogical syllogisms might easily be proved to be Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, and Earl of Chester,

and Duke of York to boot: this would be but a modest and moderate assumption in a Welsh pedigree. My friends loved mysteries which were never worth penetrating; farthing secrets not of sufficient importance for finding out. I learned subsequently what was the meaning of all this. The true nature of the transaction will be explained most readily by a letter, which has been put into my hands lately, addressed by Shelley to an attorney in Wales, the agent of Mr. Madocks.

In the brief interval between quitting Lymouth and his sudden apparition in the Treasury at Lincoln's Inn, he had become acquainted with a company of projectors and speculators; at what place, or in what way he came to know them, I never heard. He fell at once into their schemes after his manner, and with a zeal far too hot to hold. It does not appear whether he had engaged in actual personal canvass for the Tremadoc people in Sussex, as his letter might imply, or had written sundry epistles on their behalf, and had received cold answers; or, as is most probable, he had, in virtue of his former experience of the men of his native county, set them down for "cold, selfish, calculating animals," who reckoned it better to spend their money at home in the purchase of Sussex dumplings, in eating, drinking, and sleeping, than in embanking against the sea in a corner of some Welsh county.

The Duke of Norfolk, I was informed, politely answered the request for pecuniary assistance, and regretted that he had no funds at his immediate disposal, which most likely was true; but their inference was not so; that if he had a large sum of money in hand, he would have placed it instantly at the disposal of that most delightful creature, Mrs. Madocks, for the sake of her lovely friend's glossy black hair.

The attempt is said to have been a noble one; and for a thing of the kind, probably it was very good. Some four or five thousand acres of fertile land were to be gained from the sea, which were to be let at forty shillings an acre, and would have produced an income of from eight to ten thousand pounds a-year; the newly created town of Tremadoc would have been greatly benefited, as well as the neighbourhood, and a road on the top of the embankment would have united two counties of Wales, and would have shortened considerably the journey from Dublin to London and Bath: the last advantage perhaps is a doubtful one, for there are quite as many Irishmen in London and Bath as are wanted. The whole was to have been effected at the estimated cost of twenty thousand pounds. All this would have been very good for the people in that remote angle of North Wales, and particularly for Mr. Madocks himself; but it is not easy to see what the

worthy inhabitants of the Rapes of Sussex had to do with the scheme, what profit they were to derive from it, or why Bysshe should write about it in such rapturous strains; why so much "unabated and unconquerable ardour" should be kindled by one of the pecuniary speculations of a very active and sanguine speculator; what better feelings the Duke of Norfolk could have relative to this sea-wall; why it was "our country's cause;" how it could rationally excite "fond hopes, ardent desires, unremitting personal exertions in a cause, which I will desert, but with my life!" This surely is the poetry of engineering! A civil engineer must be inspired to write thus.

St. James's Coffee-house, *Nov.* 7, 1812.

My dear Williams,

I received your long and kind letter, and although press of business does not permit me to answer to its length, I do hope that it may not be deficient in kindness. I need not assure you of the pleasure which I receive from the intelligence of the safety and success of the embankment, of the honourable perseverance of the men, or your own good hopes and spirits. You know my feelings on all these things. I have too often expressed my unabated and unconquerable ardour for the success of you and your enterprises to need repetition now.

On Thursday next we set out for Tanyrallt, and expect to be with you on the ensuing Monday. The Duke of Norfolk has just returned to London. I shall call upon him this morning, and shall spare no pains in engaging his interest, or perhaps his better feelings, in our and our country's cause.

I see no hope of effecting, on my part, any grand or decisive scheme until the expiration of my minority. In Sussex I meet with no encouragement. They are a parcel of cold, selfish, and calculating animals, who seem to have no other aim or business, on earth, but to eat, drink, and sleep; but in the meanwhile my fervid hopes, my ardent desires, my unremitting personal exertions (so far as my health will allow), are all engaged in that cause, which I will desert *but with my life*. Can you hire a trustworthy maid-servant, as we shall require three in all? Believe me, I feel the attention of the Nanney family very deeply.

Harriet is now writing to Mrs. M., to express her sense of her kindness. I do think that your country owes more than I can express to the disinterestedness and activity of that administration.

Harriet and the ladies unite with me in sincerest best wishes, and believe me,

Your true friend,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

P.S.—I am much better than when you last

saw me. If I can find time to-day, I shall write to the Doctor. Mr. Bedwell will settle the 70*l.* affair.

The date of a letter shows, that on the 3rd of December, 1812, Shelley was residing, probably with three trustworthy maid-servants, at Tanyrallt, near Tremadoc, in a cottage, or country house, the property of Mr. Madocks. The letter shows also that he was already getting tired, if not of the embankment, at least of the distant and inconvenient locality, and of his unenlightened neighbours.

"My parcel of books," he writes, "is not yet arrived. I own I am rather anxious concerning it, as the irregularity of the coaches in this solitude among mountains frequently causes mistakes. The verses which I have lately read are accurately descriptive of the exquisite souls by whom I am encompassed. Bigotry is so universally pervading, that the best are deeply tainted. I was speaking of your friend to a lady, who knew him during his residence in Wales. In many respects she is a woman of considerable merit, and, except in religious matters, a model of toleration. 'Oh!' she said, 'there he lived in a cottage near T——, associating with no one, and hiding his head, like a murderer, and,' she added, altering her voice to a tone of appropriate gravity, 'he was worse than that, he was

a sceptic!' I exclaimed much against the intolerance of her remark, without producing the slightest effect. She knows very well that I am a democrat; but perhaps she does not do me justice! There is more philosophy in one square inch of any tradesman's counter, than in the whole of Cambria. It is the last stronghold of the most vulgar and commonplace prejudices of aristocracy. Lawyers of unexampled villainy rule and grind the poor, whilst they cheat the rich. The peasants are mere serfs, and are fed and lodged worse than pigs. The gentry have all the ferocity and despotism of the ancient barons, without their dignity and chivalric disdain of shame and danger. The poor are as abject as slaves, and the rich as tyrannical as bashaws."

In another letter from Tanyrallt, in Carnarvonshire, of the 17th of December, Bysshe says:—

"I am preparing a volume of minor poems, respecting the publication of which I shall request the judgment both of a publisher and a friend. A very obvious question would be, Will they sell, or not? Subjoined is a list of books, which I wish you to send to me very soon. I am determined to apply myself to a study that is hateful and disgusting to my very soul, but which is above all studies necessary for him who would be listened to as a mender of antiquated abuses—I mean, that record of crimes and miseries—history. You see that the metaphy-

sical works, after which my heart hankers, are not numerous. In this list, one thing will you take care of for me, that the standard and reputable works on history, &c., be of the cheapest possible editions; with respect to the metaphysical works, I am less scrupulous. Spinoza you may, or may not, be able to obtain. Kant is translated into Latin by some Englishman."

Bysshe did not begin to learn the German language until the year 1815.

"I would prefer that the Greek Classics should have Latin, or English, translations printed opposite; if they are not to be obtained thus, they must be sent otherwise. Mrs. Shelley is attacking Latin with considerable resolution, and can already read many odes in Horace."

There follows, by way of postscript, a long list of standard historical works, a few on physics and metaphysics, and four venerated names, Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Plutarch, "with translations in Latin or English subjoined. To these, which will take some stiff reading, you may add anything new, that you conceive of sufficient worth." On the shortest day, the 21st of December, he writes to London for "Marcus Antoninus, Seneca, and Plato; the last author with a translation."

It did not transpire, whether Shelley had any personal interview with William Godwin during his

brief visit to London in November; the proceedings of my friend were shrouded in his habitual mystery, and his hasty and devious footsteps seldom left any traces behind him; it was not otherwise, than if he had been walking upon the surface of the sea. According to ordinary rules, one would infer that Bysshe called upon him, and offered some explanation, or apology, for having left his visitor so strangely in the lurch at Lymouth. But an inspired poet is not governed by ordinary rules, and there is no indication in William Godwin's letter of their having as yet met. Possibly the flight from Lymouth was too outrageous a slight to be expiated by an early exposition of motives face to face with a lover of wisdom for its own sake, however meek and mild he might be. It is certain, that William Godwin had no large sums of money at his disposal, wherewith the favourite speculation of the moment might have been aided, nor was he an adept in the science of banking out the sea, so that in the present emergency his counsels would have availed little. Besides, a permanent residence in London was then contemplated as being about to commence immediately, and personal acquaintance might naturally and conveniently be postponed until a frequent and familiar intercourse might be carried on without interruption.

William Godwin's letter to Shelley is dated the

10th of December, 1812. It treats of the study of history; and although the latter part is wanting, the fragment is of considerable length, and therefore it must be passed over, at least, for the present. Nevertheless, it is worthy of attention; of more attention than the young historical student appears to have bestowed upon it, whose reading was not influenced in any the smallest degree by advice humbly and urgently demanded.

The year 1813 opens at Tanyrallt with this extract from a letter of the 2nd of January:

"On reflection, I feel rather chagrined that I excepted against the Georgics. I fear it may withhold your hand, when you would otherwise send me some really valuable work. I assure you I am quite reconciled to Professor Martyn. Harriet will probably derive some assistance from his translation, when she has mastered Horace. Now to answer your questions. The Tractatus Polemicopoliticus and the Opera Posthuma of Spinoza will fully suffice, at least, for the present. With respect to Kant, there is a work of his, and, as I judged, the only one, which has been translated into Latin by some Doctor. This, which is his most celebrated work, is the only one I require; and I have no choice between a Latin, a French, and an English translation. My poems will, I fear, little stand the criticism even of friendship; some of the latter ones

have the merit of conveying a meaning in every word, and all are faithful pictures of my feelings at the time of writing them. But they are, in a great measure, abrupt and obscure—all breathing hatred of despotism and bigotry; but, I think, not too openly for publication. One fault they are indisputably exempt from, that of being a volume of fashionable literature. I doubt not but some friendly hand will clip the wings of my Pegasus considerably. Small Christmas, or Easter, Offerings of a neat little book have frequently a surprising effect. The Emperors of China seem to form a singular exception to the usual doltishness of the regal race. I sympathize with his Imperial Majesty."

What this compliment to the Emperor of China relates to does not appear.

"Harriet, her sister, and myself hope to see some of our friends here early in the spring."

The early spring will speak for itself, and will tell its own tale. On the 26th of January, he writes from Tanyrallt, Tremadoc.

"The thermometer is twelve degrees below freezing; this is Russian cold! I am provoked by the stupidity of the people who were to send the box, &c., &c."

But on the manifold inconveniences of a residence in the wilderness it is needless to expatiate.

"I certainly wish to have all Kant's works. My

question concerning the Encyclopédie was more of curiosity than want."

This kind of liberal curiosity may be easily gratified in London, but not at Tremadoc.

"I expect to have Queen Mab and the other poems finished by March. Queen Mab will be in ten cantos, and will contain about 2800 lines; the other poems contain probably as much more. The notes to Queen Mab will be long and philosophical; I shall take that opportunity, which I judge to be a safe one, of submitting for public discussion principles of reformation, which I decline to do syllogistically in the poem. A poem very didactic is, I think, very stupid. I do not think that Sir William Drummond's arguments have much weight. His Œdipus Judaicus has completely failed in making me a convert."

To proceed with the extracts from Shelley's letters. He writes thus from Wales on the 19th of February:—

"You would very much oblige me if you would collect all possible documents on the Precession of the Equinoxes, as also anything that may throw light upon the question of, whether or not the position of the Earth on its poles is not yearly becoming less oblique. It is an astronomical affair." His attention had probably been called to equinoctial considerations by Sir William Drummond and

other writers of the same stamp; however this might be, the astronomical affair and the extensive commission to which it gave occasion, would certainly puzzle the brains of a correspondent as far advanced in astronomy, as a Carnarvonshire squire.

Dry Drummond's Œdipus is altogether unreadable; but Volney's Ruins was one of Harriet's text-books, which she used to read aloud for our instruction and edification.

"Queen Mab," he continues, "is finished and transcribed. I am now preparing the notes, which shall be very long and philosophical. It will be received with the other poems; I should think, that the whole should form one volume: but of that we can speak hereafter. As to the French Encyclopédie, it is a book, which I am desirous, very desirous, of possessing. And if I could get a few months' credit (being at present rather low in cash), I should very much desire to have it. How long will the poems be printing after they have been received?"

"Excuse the earnestness of the first part of my letter. I feel warmly on this subject, and I flatter myself, that so long as your own independence and liberty remain uncompromised, you are inclined to second my desires."

Of the earnestness which he seeks to excuse, the first sentence of the letter will afford a specimen:

"I am boiling with indignation at the horrible injustice and tyranny of the sentence pronounced on the editor of the Examiner and his brother; and it is on this subject, that I write to you. Surely the seal of abjectness and slavery is indelibly stamped upon the character of England."

After a farther display of very excusable earnestness, he proposes, that a public subscription to pay the fine imposed be set on foot, and with his unbounded, and too often inconsiderate, liberality, he sends twenty pounds as his own contribution, should the project be adopted.

A pert journalist had presumed to call a very important personage "an Adonis of sixty," and had even ventured to charge him with being "fat;" whereas the Adonis was disposed to sink his age, and to esteem his figure as eminently correct, and in its fulness graceful. The author lying always under the stern necessity of saying something every week to the purpose, if possible, and relevant to the passing concerns of the day, or at all events of saying something to fill up his paper; in addition to the imputation of corpulency with its attendant jests, had discoursed of the ordinary topics of censure, which in those times were thought to be intimately connected with the name of that personage. He might never be mentioned indeed by his former adherents without some reference to these; without

reiterating the old complaint, that the monarch had turned the tables and his own back, a broad fat back it was affirmed to be in this instance, upon the associates and bottle-holders of the heir-apparent. In this respect the article complained of had not gone, it was freely acknowledged, beyond the proper limits of sound Whig doctrines, and constitutional scurrillity; but it had pronounced him to be a fat, old man. This was saucy, and peculiarly offensive to a ruler, who was resolved to be still reputed a slim, slender-waisted youth.

It might well be, that the personal ridicule was reprehensible to a certain extent, but most assuredly it was foolish to be so deeply offended at it. It was childish to own so much displeasure, and preposterous to file a criminal information in such a case. It is hard to believe, that a public prosecutor could have been found indiscreet enough to disgrace himself and his office by taking up seriously so absurd a matter;—to comprehend, how the defence could have been so conducted, and a jury packed, so that a verdict of guilty could have been procured. A fine of fifty pounds imposed upon the convicted defendants, or a month's imprisonment, would have been a moderate and sufficient punishment; a mark of disapprobation fully adequate to the offence, such as it was. A fine of one thousand pounds, and the incarceration of two persons for two years, appeared

to be a measure of outrageous and stolid vengeance, too insane to be awarded by the slowest of judges, and of too manifest and patent a tendency to bring the administration of criminal justice into utter and universal contempt.

It is said to be a question of what wood Mercuries ought to be made; but there could be no question, after this frantic sentence, whether successful advocates, who had turned trading politicians, were the proper material out of which to construct a bench of judges. Moreover, it seems quite incredible, that the royal prerogative of mercy did not interpose to remedy the wrong, and to soothe the shocked and irritated feelings of the public, by remitting the greater part of the monstrous punishment.

The libel possibly was blameable; the prosecution, the persecution, and rigorous condemnation were altogether indefensible. However, it was a paltry, pitiful affair on both sides, and in every point of view. It was party spite against party spite, and nothing more. It was in its origin and nature an attempt to annoy political opponents; and in its results the insulting aggressors, political assailants, had the worst of it. Consequently there was nothing in the transaction to cause indignation, a virtuous indignation, to boil over. A lower temperature, than 212°, on a philosopher's thermometer

would have indicated warmth of displeasure equal to censure adequately the injustice and tyranny of an improper and impolitic severity. The fancy of a sensitive, imaginative young poet surely runs riot, when he writes to his correspondent of "the great debt of obligation, which the people of England owe to a good, brave, enlightened man, to the champion of their liberties and virtues, which if they hesitate to pay, they are dead, cold, stony-hearted, and insensible, and brutalised by centuries of unremitting bondage."

The great debt being in truth, that the champion of liberty and virtue had called somebody, or other, "a fat Adonis of sixty," in order that he might sell his journal, divert his readers, and please the political adventurers of his own party, who might, or might not, feel themselves bound in gratitude to stand by him, to compensate his losses and sufferings, and to be substantially thankful for having afforded them so good a grievance, as the severe sentence, which sent him, for his impertinence, to tarry an unreasonably long time in a prison in Horsemonger Lane. But a scholar, a poet and a gentleman should scorn such trash; he ought not to be caught by so poor a bait.

A strange epistle, of which a copy in Mrs. Shelley's writing has lately been placed in my hands, may be conveniently introduced and noticed

in this place, as being connected with the subject, although it was written two years before, during our residence at Oxford.

What the triumph, so highly to be prized by men of liberality, on the occasion of which his sincerest congratulations were offered, really was, does not appear, nor is it material to inquire. It was probably some success of journalism, in truth interesting only to journalists; to "the fearless enlighteners of the public mind," as they are laughably, but not ironically styled. However, it is unnecessary to discuss such lofty themes. The letter is curious, because its presents one of the very few instances, in which he appeared to have contemplated the contingency of sitting in parliament. He commonly shrunk with dismay and horror from every proposal of that kind, when it was made to him by his father and other members of his family, or by the Duke of Norfolk. But I apprehend, that he contemplated it only for a moment, during the brief dream, in which he penned this fanciful and whimsical effusion; this vision of want of judgment. The Abbé Barruel's History of Jacobinism was a favourite book at college, he went through the four volumes again and again, swallowing with eager credulity the fictions and exaggerations of that readily believing, or readily inventing author. He used to read aloud to me with rapturous enthusiasm

the wondrous tales of German Illuminati; and he was disappointed, sometimes even displeased, when I expressed doubt or disbelief.

The staple of the letter of the 2nd of March is some crude notion of applying the machinery of Illuminism to establish on a firm basis the rational liberty of the press; or perhaps the unrestrained licence of flippant journalism. The same letter also illustrates in a striking manner Bysshe's perilous propensity, by writing to them with effusion, of making the acquaintance of persons of some notoriety, but of whose character and habits of life he knew nothing whatever.

His introduction of himself to William Godwin, a remarkable example of this very unusual course of proceeding, has been already fully detailed. This practice surely is imprudent and improper; it is certainly unnecessary, for it is always easy to be personally presented, or made known by letter, through the intervention of a common acquaintance. Besides, there is something ridiculous in so abrupt and hasty a step; it too nearly resembles dealing through an advertisement in the Times.

Wanted a good, plain cook; or housekeeper to a single gentleman—wanted a philosopher; a profound one, who is a friend to liberty, will be preferred. If any fearless enlightener of the public mind will

apply at the butter-shop, he will hear of something to his advantage.

The truth is, my poor friend knew well that it was quite wrong, because he never communicated his intentions to myself, or to any of his friends; he never told me what he had done, being unquestionably ashamed of his precipitancy; he never showed me the letter, or the answer to it, if he ever received one. Now for the letter, which I never read until very recently.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD, *March* 2, 1811.

SIR,

Permit me, although a stranger, to offer my sincerest congratulations on the occasion of that triumph so highly to be prized by men of liberality; permit me also to submit to your consideration, as one of the most fearless enlighteners of the public mind at the present time, a scheme of mutual safety and mutual indemnification for men of public spirit and principle, which if carried into effect, would evidently be productive of incalculable advantages: of the scheme the following is an address to the public, the proposal for a meeting, and it shall be modified according to your judgment, if you will do me the honour to consider the point.

The ultimate intention of my aim is to induce

a meeting of such enlightened and unprejudiced members of the community, whose independent principles expose them to evils which might thus become alleviated; and to form a methodical society, which should be organized so as to resist the coalition of the enemies of liberty, which at present renders any expression of opinion on matters of policy dangerous to individuals. It has been for want of societies of this nature, that corruption has attained the height at which we now behold it; nor can any of us bear in mind the very great influence, which some years since was gained by *Illuminism*, without considering, that a society of equal extent might establish national liberty on as firm a basis, as that which would have supported the visionary schemes of a completely equalised community.

Although perfectly unacquainted with you privately, I address you as a common friend to *liberty*, thinking that in cases of this urgency and importance, etiquette ought not to stand in the way of usefulness.

My father is in parliament, and on attaining twenty-one, I shall in all probability fill his vacant seat. On account of the responsibility, to which my residence in this University subjects me, I, of course, dare not publicly avow all I think, but the time will come, when I hope, that my every

endeavour, insufficient as this may be, will be directed to the advancement of liberty.

"I remain, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Leigh Hunt.

In the course of the winter, 1812—1813, I received several letters from my young friends at Tanyrallt.

I have found three from Bysshe; they are most interesting. I present them together, being unwilling to interrupt the series of extracts from his communications with other correspondents.

TANYRALLT, *Dec.* 3, 1812.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter begins with the Duke of Norfolk. I stared, when I saw his name; from the very moment I parted from you to the moment of the receipt of your letter, I had thought no more of the Duke of Norfolk, than of the man in the moon. I will this instant sit down, and do penance for my involuntary crime by writing a long and wheedling letter to his Grace, and you shall be duly informed of the success of the experiment. I have no hopes, however, of bending my father, but by the mere force of gross interest, and therefore suppose it

equally impossible, that he should come to terms before I am of age, as that he should hold out at the expiration of my minority. Be it as it may, I will give him a fair chance, I will put on my most good-humoured and conciliatory countenance, which Heaven knows, will in this case have something of the Grimgriffinhoff in it after all. When I see him, though I shall say the civilest things imaginable, yet I shall not look as if I liked him, because I do not like him.

You think, that, because your reasonings on the subject of moral and political science have led you wide of me, you are regarded by me with less complacency; but good intention is the essence of merit, and any qualification so involuntary, as belief, or opinion, is surely a defective standard, by which to measure out esteem. It is only when conviction is influenced by debasing and unworthy motives, that it becomes in any degree criminal.

Of such motives I do not accuse you, and you appear tainted with some portion of that illiberality, of which you indirectly accuse me, by the very spirit of suspicion, which produces that accusation.

You misinterpret my feelings on the state of the moral world, when you suppose that the bigotry of common-place republicanism, or the violence of faction, enters into them at all.

I certainly am a very resolved republican (if the

word applies), and a determined sceptic; but although I think their reasonings very defective, I am clearly aware that the noblest feelings might conduct some few reflecting minds to Aristocracy and Episcopacy. Hume certainly was an aristocrat, and Locke was a zealous Christian.

The Brown Demon, as we call our late tormentor and schoolmistress, must receive her stipend. I pay it with a heavy heart and an unwilling hand; but it must be so. She was deprived by our misjudging haste of a situation, where she was going on smoothly: and now she says, that her reputation is gone, her health ruined, her peace of mind destroyed by my barbarity; a complete victim to all the woes mental and bodily, that heroine ever suffered! This is not all fact; but certainly she is embarrassed and poor, and we being in some degree the cause, we ought to obviate it. She is an artful, superficial, ugly, hermaphroditical beast of a woman, and my astonishment at my fatuity, inconsistency, and bad taste was never so great, as after living four months with her as an inmate. What would Hell be, were such a woman in Heaven?

The society in Wales is very stupid. They are all aristocrats and saints: but that, I tell you, I do not mind in the least: the unpleasant part of the business is, that they hunt people to death, who are not so likewise.

Miss Westbrook is perfectly well; Harriet unites with me in wishing you all possible good, and I am your very sincere friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Write soon, for your letters amuse us ALL.

To T. J. H.

TANYRALLT, *Dec.* 27, 1812.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter to Harriet contains some hints of the possibility of your being at leisure in a short time. I sincerely hope that your schemes will allow a visit to Tanyrallt. The advantage of a mail within seventeen miles would entirely obviate any hitch in the affair. We all anxiously wish you would come, and hope that your hint was something better than a mere lure for the opportunity of refusal.

We are all surprised at the complaints of cold which issue from London. For a day or two, indeed, it bit a little in the first of the morning, but nothing more.

Believe me that I sympathize in your feelings on Buonaparte and Peace, very warmly. Buonaparte is a person to whom I have a very great objection; he is to me a hateful and despicable being. He is seduced by the grossest and most vulgar ambition into actions which only differ from those of pirates by virtue of the number of men and the variety of

resources under his command. His talents appear to me altogether contemptible and commonplace; incapable as he is of comparing connectedly the most obvious propositions, or relishing any pleasure truly enrapturing. Excepting Lord Castlereagh, you could not have mentioned any character but Buonaparte whom I contemn and abhor more vehemently. With respect to those victories in the North; if they tend towards peace, they are good; if otherwise, they are bad. This is the standard by which I shall ultimately measure my approbation of them. At the same time, I cannot but say that the first impression which they made on me was one of horror and regret.

Brougham's defence was certainly not so good as it might have been; it was fettered by the place wherein he stood. Entire liberty of speech was denied. He could not speak treason; he could not commit a libel; and therefore his client was not to be defended on the basis of moral truth. He was compelled to hesitate when truth was rising to his lips; he could utter that which he did utter only by circumlocution and irony. The speech of the Solicitor-General appeared to me the consummation of all shameless insolence, and the address of Lord Ellenborough so barefaced a piece of time-servingness, that I am sure his heart must have laughed at his lips as he pronounced it.

I have as yet received no answer from the Duke of Norfolk. I scarcely expect one. I do not see that it is the interest of my father to come to terms during my non-age; perhaps even not after. Do you know, I cannot prevail upon myself to care much about it. Harriet is very happy as we are; and I am very happy. I question if intimacy with my relations would add at all to our tranquillity. They would be plotting and playing the devil, or showing us to some people who would do so; or they would be dull; or they would take stupid likes or dislikes, and they certainly might cramp our liberty of movement. In fact, I have written to the Duke. I can say to my conscience, "I have done my best;" but I shall not be very unhappy, if I fail.

I continue vegetable; Harriet means to be slightly animal, until the arrival of Spring. My health is much improved by it; though partly perhaps by my removal from your nerve-racking and spirit-quelling metropolis.

We are divided between two opinions: Whether you really will allow us the heart-felt pleasure of seeing you here this winter: or whether your suggestion was a quiz.

My dear friend, I remain,

Yours very affectionately,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

TANYRALLT, *Feb.* 7, 1813.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have been teased to death for the last fortnight. Had you known the variety of the discomfitures I have undergone, you would attribute my silence to anything but unkindness or neglect. I allude to the embankment affairs, in which I thoughtlessly engaged; for when I come home to Harriet, I am the happiest of the happy. I forget whether I have expressed to you the pleasure which you know I must feel at your visit in March. I hope it will be early in the month, and that you will arrange matters so in London, that it may be protracted to the utmost possible length.

We simple people live here in a cottage extensive and tasty enough for the villa of an Italian Prince. The rent, as you may conceive, is large, but it is an object with us that they allow it to remain unpaid till I am of age.

What said Harriet of America?

You must take your place in the mail as far as Capel Cerrig, and inform me of the time you mean to be there, and I will meet you. I do not think that you have ever visited this part of North Wales. The scenery is more strikingly grand in the way from Capel Cerrig to our house than ever I beheld. The road passes at the foot of Snowdon; all around you see lofty mountain peaks, lifting their summits

far above the clouds, wildly wooded valleys below, and dark tarns reflecting every tint and shape of the scenery above them. The roads are tremendously rough; I shall bring a horse for you, as you will then be better able to see the country than when jumbled in a chaise.

Mab has gone on but slowly, although she is nearly finished. They have teased me out of all poetry. With some restrictions, I have taken your advice, though I have not been able to bring myself to rhyme. The didactic is in blank heroic verse, and the descriptive in blank lyrical measure. If an authority is of any weight in support of this singularity, Milton's "Samson Agonistes," the Greek Choruses, and (you will laugh) Southey's "Thalaba" may be adduced. I have seen your last letter to Harriet. She will answer it by next post. I need not say that your letters delight me, but all your principles do not. The species of pride which you love to encourage appears to me incapable of bearing the test of reason. Now, do not tell me that Reason is a cold and insensible arbiter. Reason is only an assemblage of our better feelings,—passion considered under a peculiar mode of its operation. This chivalric pride, although of excellent use in an age of Vandalism and brutality, is unworthy of the nineteenth century. A more elevated spirit has begun to diffuse itself, which, without deducting from the

warmth of love, or the constancy of friendship, reconciles all private feelings to public utility, and scarce suffers true Passion and true Reason to continue at war. Pride mistakes a desire of being esteemed for that of being really estimable. I scarce think that the mock humility of ecclesiastical hypocrisy is more degrading and blind. I remember when over our Oxford fire we used to discuss various subjects; fancy me present with you in spirit, and own "how vain is human pride!" Perhaps you will say that my Republicanism is proud; it certainly is far removed from pot-house democracy, and knows with what smile to hear the servile applauses of an inconsistent mob. But though its cheeks could feel without a blush the hand of insult strike, its soul would shrink neither from the scaffold nor the stake, nor from those deeds and habits which are obnoxious to slaves in power. My Republicanism, it is true, would bear with an aristocracy of chivalry and refinement before an aristocracy of commerce and vulgarity; not, however, from pride, but because the one I consider as approaching most nearly to what man ought to be. So much for Pride!

Since I wrote the above, I have finished the rough sketch of my poem. As I have not abated an iota of the infidelity or cosmopolicy of it, sufficient will remain, exclusively of innumerable faults, invisible

to partial eyes, to make it very unpopular. Like all egotists, I shall console myself with what I may call, if I please, the suffrages of the chosen few, who can think and feel, or of those friends whose personal partialities may blind them to all defects. I mean to subjoin copious philosophical notes.

Harriet has a bold scheme of writing you a Latin letter. If you have an Ovid's Metamorphoses, she will thank you to bring it. I do not teach her grammatically, but by the less laborious method of teaching her the English of Latin words, intending afterwards to give her a general idea of grammar. She unites with me in all kindest wishes.

To T. J. H.

CHAPTER VII.

I HAD promised to visit my young friends in their wilderness during the Spring Circuit; that is to say, at the beginning of March; in about a month from the date of Bysshe's last letter. It would have been a great pleasure to have met again; to have spent a few pleasant weeks with them; to have seen the famous embankment, and all the other wonders of nature and art, and to have examined in a course of long walks, in company with my friend, that part of the Principality, an interesting tract of country which I had never set eyes upon. This project was rudely and abruptly put an end to by a very remarkable incident, if incident it may be called. Although I had known Bysshe intimately for three or four years, I could still be surprised, and I was not a little surprised by a letter which I received one morning from Harriet. Frolicksome fairies, evil-disposed elves, spiteful spirits, and daring demons have been in all times the torment of the milk-maid, the miner, the husbandman; no

calling, no trade, no mystery, no occupation has been exempt from their malignant influence and mischievous interference; even the quiet pursuits of the recluse student are not privileged or protected from præternatural intromission and disturbance. I have occupied the same dingy chambers in the Temple for some fifty years, and during the lapse of half a century countless letters and papers of various kinds have been received and suffered to accumulate there. Such of them as related to matters of business were classed and tied up in bundles, and arranged under their proper heads; but those which concerned private friendships and domestic affairs merely were put away without order and indiscriminately, as soon as each had been read and answered; where an answer was required; and they have rarely been referred to subsequently, or disturbed. In locked drawers, desks, and closets, every letter, every scrap of paper, although covered thickly with dust and soot, and in utter confusion, must remain, a vast, rude, and undigested mass; but still it must be in existence, and on a diligent search should undoubtedly be forthcoming. But it is not so; far otherwise! When I undertook to write the life of my incomparable friend, my first care was to collect materials for the task. Accordingly, I spent several long and laborious days in the painful office, painful in every way, of looking over my ample collections,

and selecting from my several repositories whatever had any reference to the subject. I never had such dirty hands, or went through so filthy a job, as when I made the retrospect of my past life. Besides, it was far too like the proceedings of the Day of Judgment—of the great and terrible day, when the secrets of all hearts will be revealed—to be perfectly agreeable. Unavailing and painful regrets; the revival of distressing, but forgotten, occurrences; afflicting and mortifying recollections,—a fresh flood of the ebbed waters of a wide sea of troubles. All this and more might have been borne, and indeed was borne, but the harvest ought to have been as abundant as the toils of the labourer were heavy: the crop disappointed me. The Cobbold had been there before me; it seemed that the tiny subjects of Queen Mab had prevented me; that they had previously rifled my long-neglected hoards. Shelley printed books that they might be pirated mercilessly; he gave copies of them to his friends, or reserved them for himself, that they might be borrowed without notice, and never to be returned; in one word—stolen. Everything referring in any way to him, not under lock and key, was accounted derelict; it became the property of the first occupant, until he also should be stripped of it in turn: whatever had his mark upon it was outlawed,—it bore a wolf's head! Of this ban I was fully sen-

sible; I had long felt the full weight of it; and therefore I had been the more careful jealously to secure my stores, to keep them in thick darkness and secrecy. It is impossible to believe that anything has been actually lost; but certainly there are many things upon which I am unable at present to lay my hand. Hereafter, doubtless, they will turn up. The inconvenience is only temporary, but it is considerable. Some things I am unwilling to state, not having my vouchers by me; other things, probably, I have forgotten, but may hope some day, on recovering my papers, to be reminded of them, and that my memory will thus be refreshed. I have an uncertain, obscure, hazy recollection of having separated, many years ago, Harriet's letters from the others; for what purpose I do not remember,— this is of little moment,— neither can I remember where I deposited them, which is most unfortunate.

It has been stated confidently, that Harriet Shelley always spelt her name Harriett, with a double (tt) at the end; it is a trifling matter, indeed, but it is well to be correct even in trifles. I have seen many of her letters, addressed to others, as well as to myself, but her Christian name never was spelt so,—always Harriet. And Shelley, who frequently mentioned her in his letters and journals, always wrote Harriet. The only letters of hers which I

can meet with at present are three or four, which I appear to have overlooked; so that I may affirm, rather paradoxically, that I have such of her letters as I had lost, and I have lost those which I have. Amongst the letters missing is that which cut off my promised visit to Carnarvonshire. However, I have been furnished with a letter to another party, in which the Hegira, the flight from Mecca—from Tanyrallt, at least—is described, and the cause of their flight. The Pilgrim Good Intent withdrew hastily, precipitately, to Dublin, and this is the strange story of his Progress :—

TANYRALLT, *March* 3, 1813.

DEAR SIR,

I have just escaped an atrocious assassination. O send the twenty pounds, if you have it! You will perhaps hear of me no more!

Your Friend,

PERCY SHELLEY.

Mr. Shelley is so dreadfully nervous to-day, from being up all night, that I am afraid what he has written will alarm you very much.

We intend to leave this place as soon as possible, as our lives are not safe as long as we remain. It is no common robber we dread, but a person who is

actuated by revenge,—who threatens my life and my sister's as well.

If you can send us the money, it will greatly add to our comfort.

Sir, I remain,

Your sincere Friend,

H. SHELLEY.

To Mr. H. T., London.

BANGOR FERRY, *March* 6, 1813.

DEAR SIR,

In the first stage of our journey towards Dublin we met with your letter; the remittance rescued us from a situation of peculiar perplexity.

I am now recovered from an illness brought on by watching, fatigue, and alarm, and we are proceeding to Dublin to dissipate the unpleasing impressions associated with the scene of our alarm: we expect to be there on the 8th; you shall then hear the detail of our distresses.

The ball of the assassin's pistol (he fired at me twice) penetrated my nightgown, and pierced the wainscot. He is yet undiscovered, though not unsuspected, as you will learn from my next.

Yours faithfully,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. H. T., London.

35, Cuff Street, Stephen's Green, Dublin.
March 12, 1813.

My dear Sir,

We arrived here last Tuesday, after a most tedious passage of forty hours, during the whole of which time we were dreadfully ill. I'm afraid no diet will prevent us from the common lot of suffering when obliged to take a sea voyage.

Mr. Shelley promised you a recital of the horrible events that caused us to leave Wales. I have undertaken the task, as I wish to spare him, in the present nervous state of his health, everything that can recall to his mind the horrors of that night, which I will relate:

On the night of the 26th February, we retired to bed between ten and eleven o'clock. We had been in bed about half-an-hour, when Mr. S. heard a noise proceeding from one of the parlours. He immediately went down stairs with two pistols which he had loaded that night, expecting to have occasion for them. He went into the billiard-room, when he heard footsteps retreating; he followed into another little room, which was called an office. He there saw a man in the act of quitting the room through a glass window which opened into the shrubbery; the man fired at Mr. S., which he avoided. Bysshe then fired; but it flashed in the pan. The man then knocked Bysshe down, and they struggled on

the ground. Bysshe then fired his second pistol, which he thought wounded him in the shoulder, as he uttered a shriek and got up, when he said these words: "By God, I will be revenged. I will murder your wife, and will ravish your sister! By God, I will be revenged!" He then fled, as we hoped, for the night. Our servants were not gone to bed, but were just going, when this horrible affair happened. This was about eleven o'clock. We all assembled in the parlour, where we remained for two hours. Mr. S. then advised us to retire, thinking it was impossible he would make a second attack. We left Bysshe and our man-servant—who had only arrived that day, and who knew nothing of the house—to sit up. I had been in bed three hours when I heard a pistol go off. I immediately ran down stairs, when I perceived that Bysshe's flannel gown had been shot through, and the window curtain. Bysshe had sent Daniel to see what hour it was; when he heard a noise at the window: he went there, and a man thrust his arm through the glass, and fired at him. Thank Heaven! the ball went through his gown, and he remained unhurt. Mr. S. happened to stand sideways; had he stood fronting, the ball must have killed him. Bysshe fired his pistol, but it would not go off; he then aimed a blow at him with an old sword, which we found in the house. The assassin attempted to get the sword from him,

and just as he was pulling it away, Dan rushed into the room, when he made his escape. This was at four in the morning. It had been a most dreadful night; the wind was as loud as thunder, and the rain descended in torrents. Nothing has been heard of him, and we have every reason to believe it was no stranger, as there is a man of the name of Luson, who, the next morning that it happened, went and told the shop-keepers that it was a tale of Mr. Shelley's to impose upon them, that he might leave the country without paying his bills. This they believed, and none of them attempted to do anything towards his discovery. We left Tanyrallt on Sunday, and stayed, till everything was ready for our leaving the place, at the house of the Solicitor-General of the County, who lived seven miles from us. This Mr. Luson had been heard to say, that he was determined to drive us out of the country. He once happened to get hold of a little pamphlet which Mr. S. had printed in Dublin. This he sent up to Government; in fact, he was for ever saying something against us, and that because we were determined not to admit him to our house, because we had heard his character, and from acts of his, we found that he was malignant and cruel to the greatest degree.

We experienced pleasure in reading your letter, at the time when every one seemed to be plotting

against us; when those who, a few weeks back, had been offering their services, shrunk from the task, when called upon in a moment like that.

Mr. Shelley and my sister unite with me in kind regards; whilst I remain,

Yours truly,

H. SHELLEY.

To Mr. H. T., London.

DEAR SIR,

Harriet related to you the mysterious events which caused our departure from Tanyrallt. I was at that time so nervous and unsettled as to be wholly incapable of the task. By your kindness, we are relieved from all pecuniary difficulties. We only wanted a little breathing time, which the rapidity of our persecutions was unwilling to allow. I will readily repay the twenty pounds when I hear from my correspondent in London.

Yours faithfully,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. H. T.

Harriet's letter to me was written from Tanyrallt, a day or two after the catastrophe; it bore an earlier date, but in other respects it was, to the best of my recollection, precisely similar, word for word, indeed, to her letter from Dublin of the 12th of March. I

have been informed, that she also sent to other persons a narrative of the nightly fears in the same terms, writing descriptive circulars, and dispatching them in different directions. Persons acquainted with the localities and with the circumstances, and who had carefully investigated the matter, were unanimous in the opinion, that no such attempt was ever made. I never met with any person who believed in it. I have heard other histories, alike apocryphal, of attacks made by the good people of North Wales upon persons of whose sentiments, religious or political, they were supposed to disapprove; but the ale-bibbers and devourers of Welsh-rabbits are too wise, or too stolid, to care how much logic any man may chop within the Principality, or how fine he may chop it. What could the quiet, sheep-tending, mutton-eating, stocking-knitting folks in a secluded corner of Carnarvonshire care about an unread and unreadable pamphlet on Catholic claims and the wrongs of Ireland, privately printed in Dublin? Apollo, the shepherd, would not credit, that a simple pastoral race could murderously assault, and basely assassinate, a brother shepherd. How could the countrymen of Talliessin and the other immortal bards persecute and expel from their land of poesy and song the special favourite and pet of the Aonian maids? Neither Bysshe nor Harriet ever spoke to me of the assassination; and the lovely

Eliza observed on this subject, as on all others, her wonted silence. There is certainly something fabulous and mythic, that carries us back to the earliest ages and infancy of Rome, leaving us there amidst historical doubts, in the avowed determination of the Cambro-British Tarquin concerning her. Burglary, arson, murder, we can contemplate with dry eyes; but to ravish a guardian angel! The thought of such violation could not possibly have entered into any head but her own; her maidenly fears must have been suggested by an excess of virgin timidity. It is astonishing, indeed, that the good Harriet could so coolly repeat the vain threat.

Dan was an emancipator and a philanthropist. This is his story; it is worthy to be told in an Irish melody, and sung to the harp of Erin. He had been apprehended for posting, distributing, or publishing printed papers, wanting the name of the printer; convicted, and imprisoned. A good angel, although possibly a rebel angel, delivered Daniel from the lions' den. By paying the penalty for him, or by other humane interposition, he was set free; and, marvellous to relate, Bysshe took the released bill-sticker into his service. Dan was a short, thickset, hard-featured man, of a pure Celtic type. He could not, or would not, speak, or understand, the English language, or comprehend anything whatever. They brought him to London with them, in the following

Spring, where I saw him at a hotel, soon after their arrival. Here the stupid, starved savage over-eat himself to such a degree as to bring on a very severe, if not dangerous, illness. It was necessary to remove him to a hospital; and there, after much suffering, he was at last cured, chiefly by the change of hospital diet from hotel fare. Bysshe was persuaded, with some difficulty, to part with him, Harriet declaring he was so faithful. For his health's sake, he was remitted to his accustomed potatoes and butter-milk;—the bog-trotter was trotted back to his native bogs; a salutary precedent that might have been very extensively followed, and with the best results.

What part this ruffian may have played in the strange scenes at Tanyrallt,—for he was in the thick of them,—it is hard to conjecture; whether he had any strictly Hibernian objects of plunder and ordinary villany in view, which were accidentally frustrated; or got up a nocturnal row for the purpose of displaying his fidelity; or created the disturbance through a barbarian panic; or was set on and instructed by some moving power, to whom it was at heart to quit Wales, and for some private end to go again to Ireland,—we may soon lose ourselves in conjectures, in vain and bootless conjectures. One thing at least is certain, viz. that Shelley was in a nervous, unsettled

state, which was far more likely to be the parent of imaginary aggressions, than the fruit and offspring of a real attack, on the mind of a man of remarkable and unquestionable courage. He certainly never spoke of the murderous assault to me. With regard to what he may have related to others, I can only say, that these assertions were the result of his being agitated with fury, and possessed by the god; for we must speak poetically of a poet. And we may add, whatever the errors and failings of the Divine Poet may have been, womankind is too weak to bear a second Shelley!

A letter addressed to the agent of Mr. Maddocks relates to this attack. It is not dated, but it seems to have been written before they quitted Tanyrallt, and under a strong impression of the reality of a transaction of which the broken windows of the house gave testimony, and bore indications. It was as follows:—

My dear Williams,

I am surprised that the wretch who attacked me has not been heard of. Surely enquiries have not been sufficiently general, or particular?

Mr. Nanney requests that you will order that some boards should be nailed against the broken windows of Tanyrallt. We are in immediate want of money. Could you borrow twenty-five pounds in

my name, to pay my little debts? I know your brother could lend me that sum. I think you could ask him on such an occasion as this.

My dear Williams, yours very truly,

P. B. SHELLEY.

CHAPTER VIII.

My promised visit to Tanyrallt was put an end to by the assassination. My young friends had gone to Ireland; why they repaired to that country a second time, I could never learn. As a compensation for the expected visit in Wales, I was urgently required to join them in Dublin; to remain there for a week or ten days, and having viewed that capital and its environs, to return with them to London, where they had determined to reside permanently; to live there indeed "for ever." It was the month of March, during the Spring Circuit, a period when special pleaders, if not absolutely idle, have comparatively little employment; and I could be spared at Chambers without inconvenience. I had made up my mind to travel at this season to the extreme parts of Carnarvonshire, to undertake a long journey for no long visit; consequently, to extend my western course to Dublin was not an alarming addition in distance, or trouble, to the trip originally resolved upon.

Although the metropolis of Ireland is not in any respect a first-rate city, it was still no doubt, in its decay, a more important and remarkable place than Tremadoc, of which the grandeur was incipient and future. I received two or three letters from my friends in Ireland, pressing me to come to them immediately, informing me how I was to proceed, and where I should meet with them; and assuring me that they would anxiously wait for my coming, and would not leave Dublin until we could quit it together. These letters I cannot now find; I took them with me to serve as guides in a strange land, and it is not improbable that I lost them on the journey.

There were in those days two mail-coaches to Holyhead, one of them pursuing the route by Chester, and the other by Shrewsbury; I secured an outside place by the former. At that time of life I was regardless of cold and exposure to the weather, but a friend to whom I communicated my projected expedition, compelled me to accept the loan of his box-coat, assuring me, that I should greatly need it by night at that season amongst the Welsh mountains. I took my seat on the box by the side of the coachman, and left London at nine o'clock on a dark, threatening night.

We had not advanced far before rain began to fall, at first softly, and soon afterwards heavily.

My friend's box-coat was of frieze, of a soft spongy texture, an excellent defence against dry cold, but affording protection for a short time only against continuing rain, so that I was soon wet to the skin. I seemed indeed to be more wet myself by reason of the wet rug, which I had on, than I should have been without it: I appeared to be clothed in a full suit of wet sponge. I suppose we stopped for our meals in the course of the night and on the following day, but not often, and never for a long time. When and where we baited, I do not remember. I remember nothing but wet and cold; it continued always to rain, to rain from the west, to rain in my face. Heaven's water descended upon my hat; it ran from my hat down my neck; it penetrated the thick soft coat to my body; it flowed copiously over my chilly hands, issuing from the sleeves; and flowing freely out of my trowsers, at the ankles, irrigated incessantly my benumbed feet; and the cushion of the box, upon which I sat, and where all things were disagreeable, this was the most disagreeable thing of all, became saturated with moisture, like a piece of turf newly dug out of a flooded bog. In those early and inhospitable ages no apron protected the knees of the coachman and his assessor; during my long and manifold journeys on the outside of coaches I have frequently wondered, why there was no such defence, and I have greatly and vainly

desiderated it; in this respect at least I was before my age!

"It is rather soft weather, gentlemen!" said our other outside passenger, who sat behind us on the roof. He was a tall, bony, red-haired Scot, to the full as wet as myself; about once every hour he observed with much seriousness, and with the air of one who had made an unexpected discovery, to the coachmen and myself,

"It is rather soft weather, gentlemen!"

"It is, indeed," I answered.

"Soft and be ——" exclaimed my friend on the right.

A quarter of an hour after his first remark our solemn fellow-passenger from the north ventured upon a second, uttering it also as if it were a novelty,

"And it is not over-warm! Not a bit!"

This was his whole stock of small talk. I recollect that we remained some time at Chester to take supper; and that the supper was nasty, and the inn dirty and disagreeable, and that there was much confusion, because the passengers by other coaches supped at the same time and in the same room.

I, wet, mounted my wet seat again, sitting now by a rude companion, who was conspicuously a Welshman, and looked more like a shepherd than a coachman. We soon approached the mountains and the

sea; and then, to solace my second night of travel, it began to rain in good earnest, and as if it liked it, and the heavier rain was rendered still more impressive by a squally wind. But it made little difference to me; I had been like a spout too long to mind it: that the water ran along a good deal faster under my clothes, did not seem to be any concern of mine!

The guard told me, that we were to breakfast at Conway. This information comforted; it promised warmth and refreshment; the pleasing images and foretaste of warm tea, hot toast, and possibly of broiled meats, consoled me in passing through wind and rain, and the county of Flint. Fortunately, I did not yet know what a breakfast at Conway was.

The Cambrian coachman pulled up short at the mouth of a wide river, wild, rough, and stormy, as the sea itself, and the sea was pouring into it with mad fury. We got into a boat, or rather the mail-coach was emptied of all its lumber, living, dead and half-dead, into a large ferry-boat; we had a rude and tedious passage across. When we were midway, they spoke of a fatal accident that had occurred there just a month before; that the ferry-boat was upset and the mail-guard drowned.

Twenty years afterwards, in 1833, I visited Conway again, being a Commissioner of Municipal Corporations, and I spoke of this occurrence

to the Vicar; he took me into the churchyard, and pointed out to me the grave, tombstone, and epitaph of the unfortunate guard. I have travelled much by coaches; and, therefore, I know, as well as any man, and to my sorrow, what a bad breakfast is, and I assert with the hard-earned confidence of long and painful experience, that the breakfast at Conway was never surpassed. Vile bread, vile butter, and the vilest tea; we ordered other things, they readily promised to bring them, and they told us, growing impatient, that they were coming directly: but the guard came first, and gave us notice that the mail was ready to start.

Our short stay at the wretched inn was rendered still more distasteful by the odious, discordant noise of a brawling Irishman, who would keep on assuring everybody in a loud voice and an offensive brogue, that he was proud of his country: nobody noticed his vulgar clamour, but all persons present seemed to suspect that he was not so proud of it as he said he was.

Having affected us with notice, the guard set an example of promptitude by mounting the stern of the coach and sounding his horn. I ascended uncomforted to the temple of the winds and storms; and it rained and blew harder and harder, whilst we proceeded, as it were to do honour to the great mountain, Penmaenmawr, and to the furious sea.

Through flood, but not through fire, we advanced, and reached another ferry, Bangor Ferry, across the Menai Straits. It was stormy, rough, and wild, but being farther inland, farther removed from the fierce sea, it was not so formidable as the mouth of the river Conway. Here we were tumbled by rugged Welsh ferrymen, without ceremony, bag and baggage, mail bags and mail baggage, into a large boat; with the accustomed delicacy and attention of mail-coach travelling, of which the leading principle always was,—so that the letter-bags and guard are safe, the passengers and their effects may go to the devil! The wind and tide were unfavourable, and the Channel was rough; we were tossed up and down in our boat, and were a long time in crossing; but the boatmen pulled hard, and we got to shore at last.

To take our places instantly, and to make the best of our way, for we were late; these were the orders, and they were obeyed. It was something to set foot in Druid-ridden Anglesea for the first time; to traverse the whole width of Mona; to see plainly with my own eyes, that there was nothing whatever to be seen. It was delightful to believe that we should soon arrive at Holyhead—the Head it was called by general consent. It would be impossible to embark in less than twenty minutes, a space of time amply sufficient for my purpose, which was, the moment we drew up at the door of the inn, to march

with my little portmanteau in my hand into a bedroom, and to fasten the door, to strip off with all speed my wet blanket, my coat, and all my wet clothes even to my wet skin, to tie them up in a dripping bundle, and to put on everything dry; and going thus quite dry on board the packet, in a berth, on a bench, or upon the floor of the cabin, to sleep soundly, and as one would sleep after spending two long days, and two longer, sleepless nights in the rain, wind, and cold on the top of a coach.

The anticipated pleasure was a full remuneration for my sufferings. My pleased fancy prompted that I was to awake somewhat late, to go at once upon the deck, and to behold the Green Isle, and the proud palaces and tall spires of Dublin, so near to our cutter,—that I might confidently expect, in two or three hours, to be seated at breakfast with Bysshe, and to be telling him my windy, watery tale.

It rained during my transit over Anglesea; but modestly, as it ought to rain in a flat country;—as it might have rained at York, or in Middlesex. It was fair when we drew up before the door of the inn at Holyhead: we descended, and forthwith the merciless mail drove off. It was to proceed at once to the boat. All our luggage was to be put on board immediately;—nothing whatever could be taken out of the boot on any pretence. Very well! my soul said to itself; I can change my clothes on board;

the delay will not be great: in half an hour I shall be dry again, from head to foot! What a blessing!

We were to dine directly, for it was late, and our time was short; and the moment we took our seats at the table, a waiter went round with a plate to collect our money; so we paid for the dinner before we were permitted to eat it. The provisions looked well. There was a nice roast leg of mutton, mealy potatoes, and other things,—all very tempting; but before anybody was helped the inexorable guard entered with our cruel sentence. We had not an instant to lose: the packet was just about to sail.

A waiter, who seemed to be a friend in need, took me aside, and told me, in confidence, that nothing was to be had on board the packet; no victuals were supplied; nothing could be bought; and we might be a long time at sea; therefore I had better purchase the leg of mutton which had not been cut, and a loaf of bread, and he showed me a fine large loaf. I paid an exorbitant price for them, and for a bottle of sherry; but I felt that I was perhaps redeeming my forfeited life. I was then told, that I had not a moment to spare: I must run down to the boat as fast as I could, or I should be left behind." My friend indeed, the civil, compassionate waiter, assured me that he would take care that the leg of mutton and the loaf, with the wine, should be safely sent on board for me; I need not be under any

apprehensions. I ran down to the boat, and was pushed into it. We were tossed about a good while by the white-headed waves of St. George's Channel, on board the crowded boat, but the near prospect of dry clothing, an abundant and excellent supper, to be eaten at my ease and with the fullest leisure, and finally a good night's rest, sleeping quietly in some warm, snug corner, filled my fatigued brains with the most agreeable images. Had I been gently gliding down the smooth Cydnus, on board her golden galley, with the lovely Queen of Egypt, blessed by her favouring smiles, amidst the profuse and elegant luxury of Greece and of the East, I could not have felt a more lively conviction of impending happiness. We came alongside the dancing vessel: at one instant, our fickle boat would dive under its keel, and then it suddenly strove to dash bodily upon its deck. At a critical moment, roughly but skilfully, the helpless passengers were thrust head-long, in the dark night, up the side of the packet, and we found ourselves staggering on the crowded, moving, and slippery deck. The crew were busy setting the sails, and everything was in orderly confusion. As soon as our good sloop was on her course and making way, there was peace on board. It then appeared to be practicable to stretch forth my hand, and at once to grasp impending happiness. I meekly attempted to ask after my mutton

and my sherry. Roast mutton and bottled sherry have no necessary connection with the perilous navigation of the coasts of North Wales; I met with little attention and no sympathy. However, I discovered, only too clearly, that there were no advices, and no effects. I then modestly demanded my portmanteau, that I might at least put off my wet garments, and thus enjoy the poor satisfaction of enduring hunger for an indefinite period with a dry skin. The mail bags, the baggage of both the Irish mails, and the luggage of all the passengers on board, had been stowed away forwards; my portmanteau was quite safe; it would be kept dry; I might have it, when I landed; the hatches had been fastened down; it was impossible to break bulk.

The night was dark and cloudy, the wind blew fresh and cold, but fortunately it was fair. I walked the deck all night, pacing backwards and forwards, in my wet clothes; I was very cold and very hungry, chilled and famished; but I marched on bravely, walking every step of the way, and as fast as I could, from the Head to Ireland. By the morning I was dry; nor had I ever felt any the least sickness, although the sea was rough. The packet was much crowded; there were several carriages on deck, and the persons who sat in them relieved, or amused, themselves by being sick out of the window. The cabin was filled with vulgar, noisy people;

crammed, indeed. I never once ventured to go below; I took a survey of the place through the skylight, and that was enough; I saw plainly that it would not do. Besides, to sleep in my rain-soaked raiment would have been imprudent.

The next day, the third day of my pilgrimage, was fine and dry; the sky shone above me clear and bright; the wind was less strong, but it still blew cold, and I was more cold and hungry than ever. How I should have enjoyed a little breakfast, however homely; a crust of brown bread and milk, skim milk, oatmeal porridge, cold cabbage, anything; but no man gave unto me. There was a tall footman, in a purple livery, standing plate in hand by the open window of a purple coach; I made a circuit, and took an observation, and I had the gratification to see a bishop sipping hot chocolate out of a large china cup. It was pleasing to be assured that all meats and drinks had not entirely disappeared and vanished from the face of the earth; and that one fellow-creature at least was well cared for. I should have liked a little luncheon, an early dinner, the earlier the better; and I eagerly desired to catch a glimpse of Ireland and of hope, but Ireland could not be seen. Presently some Irishman declared, that he saw the Wicklow Mountains, but others, his countrymen, rudely contradicted him, and said it was impossible; so it was disputed for a long time

with much noise and vehemence and muttered threats, until the mountains were visible, and so conspicuous that there could be no mistake, no dispute, even amongst Irishmen. In the afternoon we were in the Bay, at some point, of which I do not remember the name. The captain and guard went on shore in a boat with the mail bags, leaving the poor passengers on board to settle it as we could.

The passengers, it has been said, paid the whole expense of the conveyance of letters, as well by the coaches as by the packets, and yet they were too often treated with neglect, occasionally with insolence, and sometimes, as in the present instance, even with cruelty. Our captain was a good seaman, without doubt, but he was disobliging; his crew took him for their pattern. Such of the sailors as deigned to return an answer to our questions did not know when we should land, and were proud to let us see that they did not care. A gentleman asked them to make a signal for a boat from shore: They had no right to make signals! One man, less uncivil than the rest, said, "You make any signals you please yourselves, we will not prevent you!" A passenger hung out a kind of flag; it waved about, and for a time appeared to be disregarded. At last there was a joyful cry of "A boat! a boat!" and by-and-bye a large boat, rowed by four men, came alongside. Two of the men

stepped on deck: they would take us to some place; it was five miles off, but we must give them five shillings a-head. I gladly embraced the proposal, and all the other passengers, who desired to go on shore at that spot, at once assented. It seemed that all was arranged, when a little Irishman advanced: "No! you shall not go on shore with these fellows; not one of you. I am determined. Blackguards, scoundrels, villains; I will never stand quietly by and see the gentlemen passengers by His Majesty's Post-Office Packets fleeced and scandalously plundered by these exorbitant rascals. You shall go ashore, gentlemen; you shall all go, but at your own price, not at theirs!" He was a middle-aged man, thin, and of short stature, and with an extremely Celtic face; that is to say, he looked as if his face had been broken to pieces, and the fragments had been put hastily and carelessly together again, some bits not in their places, and the room of other lost pieces had been replaced by paint, putty, and anything that was at hand. He spoke with a powerful brogue, fluently, and even eloquently, and with much vigour, energy, and action; but his language was violent and abusive. The men stood out for their price, but they were civil, respectful, humble. Four shillings and sixpence were proposed and refused. Four shillings? No! Three shillings and sixpence? The discussion seemed end-

less; the men were not less dramatic than the principal disputant. It is of no use; cast off the boat; let us go home! I was taken in by them, and dreading a still longer fast, and possibly another night on board, I said, "I will give you your price; it is not unreasonable; I will give you your five shillings in hand, if you like, only do not go ashore without me!"

"We will not go without you, sir; you may depend upon it."

The little disputant, who seemed to be a person in some authority by station, character, or office, gently put me aside.

"The gentleman is too kind to you, a great deal. You are a parcel of dirty villains; you shall not have five shillings of his money; I will take care of that!"

"The gentleman is very kind; but we are poor men; we have our bread to get!"

Two hours, at least, were wasted thus in a violent and wearisome dispute; eventually it was arranged, that they were to put us on shore at two shillings a piece. And then we were all on board the boat and away in a trice; certainly they were very smart fellows. The little wrangler was to the full as noisy in the boat, as he had been in the packet; he loudly vociferated, that two shillings a head was enough; the rowers assented, and it seemed, that we were all of one mind.

After we had made a mile, or so, of way, the brawling little fellow changed his tack.

"Do they not pull well? Are they not fine fellows? Did you ever see better rowing? Are they not boys? We must give them sixpence more. If they keep it up thus, it must be half-a-crown!" Never was there a smarter boat's crew; they were four fine young fellows; never did men pull harder: that was most manifest.

Our friend, if such he is to be called, loudly renewed and repeated his admiration at intervals; and at every burst of applause he raised the price sixpence; when we were a quarter of a mile from shore, the fare stood fixed at four shillings and sixpence, but suddenly the clamorous blockhead bellowed out:—

"I say, lads, can you hit it?"

"Oh, to be sure we can!"

"Well, then, if you hit it, you shall have your five shillings, without any abatement."

"Thank you, sir; thank you; thank your honour, kindly."

Accordingly, the head of the boat went bump against some post at the landing-place, and each of the gentlemen passengers, by His Majesty's Post-Office Packet, paid the dirty villains five shillings, the sum originally demanded.

I did not catch the name of the place where I

landed; it was at some distance, five miles, I think, from Dublin. I readily procured a car, and was jolted along a rough road and through ill-paved streets in the dusk. The driver did not, or would not, know the situation of the inn, to which he was to take me. When he was tired of driving me about, he stopped at the door of a hotel, and demanded much more than the sum agreed upon; then a mighty contention arose, and an incredible number of persons took part in it. I was firm, tendering the appointed fare. He consented in the end to take it; and now for the first time a new difficulty arose, but which I had to encounter during the whole of my stay in Ireland. I had no silver, no other money indeed than one pound notes of the Bank of England, and these were not available. Change for one of them could not be obtained. My Automedon, in despair of getting payment, after various fruitless attempts to find shillings, or tenpennies, proposed that I should give him an I O U for four shillings, on a slip of paper; I did so.

The inn was odious, the food abominable, the attendance intolerable! It took a long time to get hold of a servant; when he was caught, he promised civilly enough to do what was required; he went away and paid no more attention to the orders he had received. When he was apprehended again, which was not soon, or easily effected, he had forgotten all

about the matter. To get anything to eat was difficult, to get anything fit to be eaten impossible. Sleep after three nights watching under circumstances of extreme discomfort and vast fatigue was indispensable: a good night's rest was most desirable to one worn out and spent: in the morning I should certainly find the friends, to join whom I had endured such severe hardships. I resolved to go to bed at once; to repose a few hours would suffice. Nevertheless, in this simple, unpretending arrangement I met with new and peculiar embarrassments. There was not a single-bedded room in the house; all the sleeping rooms had two beds at the least. I could not have a room to myself; and on farther debate I was made to understand, that I could not have even a whole bed to myself; that I must make up my mind to receive a bedfellow, if need were. After much altercation I chose a bed-room with only two beds in it, secretly determining to lock and bolt the door. Being left alone, I went to secure the door, but it had neither lock, nor bolt, nor any effective latch, for that was broken, so that the door must stand ajar.

I was overcome with weariness and vexation, so I crept half-undressed into one of the two beds, and fell suddenly into a deep sleep. I did not awake till morning; it was quite light, and I awoke with horror, expecting to find by my side some

uncouth bedfellow, some big priest perhaps. It was no small relief to find that I was quite alone. Had I locked the door it would have been of no avail, for a pannel at the bottom was loose. Presently it was softly pushed aside, and a youth crept into the room.

"What do you want, pray?"

"I am the boy Pat, Mr. Hogg; I have only come to clean your honour's boots a bit!"

He took them away, and I rose, and was soon engaged in shaving a beard of four days' growth, when I heard a noise in my chamber.

Some loose boards in a corner of the room were thrust aside, and a man below began to bawl out lustily. I went to the hole in the floor, and inquired, what was the matter?

"Oh, I beg your honour's pardon, I was not speaking to you; I am speaking to the gentleman upstairs!"

And he continued to call out louder than before, until a ragged head appeared through a corresponding hole in the ceiling, which I had not noticed. A long dialogue was carried on thus through my apartment between the two gentlemen in a vociferous manner; they doubtless understood each other, but what they said was unintelligible to me.

The boy Pat did not bring my boots back; to call him on the stairs was found to be useless by

me persevering. I went down into a squalid coffee-room, and wasted my energies in fruitless efforts to procure breakfast. There was one person in the room, and he was at breakfast,—a grave, civil Scotchman. I complained to him, that I could not get anything to eat.

"You will never get anything, sir, for you do not know the house. If you choose to take your breakfast with me, you are welcome. I know the house!"

I gladly acceded to his proposal, for I was famished: I had scarcely eaten at all,—assuredly not to any good purpose,—since I left London. I took a seat at his table, and fell to, like a starving man. There were cold fowls and boiled eggs, both excellent, and good bread: the other things were nasty. He had more fowls and eggs brought: by what magic he effected it I could not comprehend, but they were supplied liberally. I ate freely, and was filled and comforted.

"I have often heard, sir, that Ireland is famous for its poultry, and such seems really to be the case, if these fowls are a fair specimen."

"I never heard the remark before. I have been all over Ireland, and, now you have mentioned it, I feel that it is so. They have fine fowls and good eggs everywhere."

"As you know the house, perhaps, sir, you can

get me my boots. The boy Pat took them away, and will not bring them back again. You have done me one favour; will you do me another?"

"Most willingly!"

The good genie then took upon him to procure my boots for me; but all his powerful incantations were required to bring it about. With much trouble, the benevolent Scottish magician conjured up the boy Pat, who, constrained by the spells, brought at first a shoe and a boot; then some odd boots, one of which was mine. I quickly seized it, and afterwards he reluctantly produced the other.

My kind preserver, fortunately for me, knew the house: he also knew Dublin, and put me in the way to find Stephen's Green, the address which Bysshe had given me. Stephen's Green is a larger and a handsomer square than Lincoln's Inn Fields, as the boastful Irish confidently assert. It is probably somewhat larger, but it is far less handsome: there are grass-fields in the middle of the square, with cows in them, and a thorn hedge all round.

I knocked at the door marked with the number indicated in the letters of my friends; and after how much fatigue and suffering! But now these were forgotten, and were about to receive their reward. A man servant answered the door; it was the right house. He told me to wait a moment.

The master of the house came running down stairs and received me cordially, shaking my hand with effusion.

I inquired eagerly after Mr. and Mrs. Shelley.

"Oh! It is all right!"

"Where are they? Pray let me see them!"

His answer certainly astonished me.

"If you will do me the honour to come here to dinner to-morrow at five o'clock, Mr. Hogg, I will give you some dirty mutton, a bottle of real, good, old port wine, and a hearty welcome: and then you shall hear all about your friends. Oh! he is a nice gentleman, Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelley; a real gentleman! Will you come?"

I thanked him for his hospitality; and I stated that I had lately arrived from London, having come to Dublin to join my friends, and that I wished to see them immediately.

"Oh! but you cannot see them immediately."

"Why not?"

"Why not—because they are just at Killarney!"

I had not yet heard of William Godwin's adventures at Lymouth; had I known them, the conviction that the picture of my fortunes in Ireland would have the honour to form a suitable pendant to a graphic delineation of his exploits in North Devon, would not have tempted me to venture upon so protracted and so painful a pilgrimage.

"It will be easy and pleasant for you, Mr. Hogg, to go on to Killarney, and join your friends there. But will you promise me not to set out before you have dined with me? I am engaged to-day, unfortunately, but to-morrow, will you come; will you promise?"

I promised very readily; for to spend a few days in seeing Dublin, to enjoy such amusements as the place might afford, and then to return to London,—this was my only safe course. I complained of the utter discomfort of my inn: "If there is no other less miserable, can decent lodgings be procured for a week?"

"I will take you to as good a hotel as any in London. I am particularly engaged at this moment; call at four, and in my walk to dinner, I will introduce you at a house where you will be perfectly comfortable."

The day was bright, sunny, dry, rather windy, and somewhat cold; it was much like March weather in England, and there was no lack of March dust in Ireland. I walked about the city, and searched out some marked objects, but the reality did not justify the magnificent descriptions which I had heard of them. Almost all things were poor and mean; some few were handsome, but scarcely anything was at all remarkable. I was punctual to my appointment. We walked together to the inn, where I had slept:

change for a one pound note was not to be had,—not to be thought of; I paid by another I O U; my new acquaintance settled the matter summarily, perhaps arbitrarily. The driver of the car had called twice, whilst I was out, to have his I O U cashed. Poor fellow! The boy Pat was caught, and he carried my portmanteau; his services were not thought worthy of an I O U. I was to think of him, when I could get change; and I was as good as my word, for frequently afterwards, when I have had a pocket full of silver, I have thought of the boy Pat; how he pushed out the loose pannel, and crept through the door, to take away my boots, and keep them from me.

CHAPTER IX.

THE hotel was a handsome house enough, in a principal street; the dinners and other meals in the coffee-room were very fair; the wine was decidedly good, and it was supplied in large bottles, each containing the full measure, a quart, or a pint. The attendance was bad, especially at first; but when I got to know the house,—that is, to know the haunts of the servants, where they were to be found, and to go and catch them, and to speak to them in a proper manner, partly familiar and partly authoritative,—it was sufficient. There were two beds in every room, but by special agreement I was to have the exclusive occupation of my bed-room; and I gave additional force to the agreement by cautiously fastening the door, in the only way in which it could be secured, by tying down the latch at night with a piece of string. A scene which I once witnessed, at a house much frequented by the Irish,—the Bush Inn, at Bristol, had not diminished my distaste for lying two in a bed, according to the ancient usages

of the Isle of Saints and virgins. The chamber-maid conducted me into a double-bedded room; I objected, and asked to have a room with only one bed in it; she said there was not one at liberty, and whilst we were disputing, a huge, hairy, he Irishman sprang out of one of the beds, and stood before us, stark naked, in the middle of the room. "The gentleman may have whichever bed he pleases; I have only this moment got into bed, and if he prefers my bed, I will get into the other; it is the same thing to me; I am always willing to accommodate a gentleman!" The woman was accustomed to the ways of her Milesian guests, and was not the least disconcerted at what she beheld, but stood by unmoved, candlestick in hand, thanking him for his civility. I went away, and finding a room with a single bed, took possession of it. I learnt afterwards that it was the practice of the Irish to sleep quite naked; and this did not lessen my disinclination to have such a bed-fellow, although, like my civil friend at the Bush, he might be always willing to accommodate a gentleman. I dined, according to his invitation and my promise, with my most obliging new acquaintance; and I was very well treated by him in every respect. He had a tall, big, handsome young wife, with bright red hair, but extremely good-looking. She was kind and polite. To my surprise, I perceived that I could not understand a word she

said, nor could I make myself understood by her; and this I found was often the case with regard to other natives, during my short residence in Dublin, their English being as unintelligible to me as their Irish.

Nothing could exceed the kindness of this gentleman; he introduced me to several of his friends, all of whom were as obliging as himself. He spoke to me of the wrongs of Ireland, and asked me what my sentiments were on that subject. I knew nothing about the matter, and consequently I had no sentiments, or opinions, to disclose. He often returned to the momentous question, as he called it, and pressed me to make a fair and free disclosure of the feelings of an honourable man. Being unwilling to deceive any one, especially so friendly a person, I said to him, continually urging me,—

"Do you know London?"

"Perfectly well; as well as I know Dublin!"

"Do you know Chancery Lane?"

"Yes! Faith! Right well."

"It is not very wide, even in the widest part?"

"No! It is very narrow. It is not like Sackville Street?"

"Not the least in the world!"

"Well, then, to tell you the truth,—and it is always best to tell the truth, and not to sail under false colours,—I would not take the trouble to walk

across Chancery Lane in the narrowest part, if by so doing I could at once redress all the wrongs and grievances of Ireland; emancipate the Catholics, and turn them all loose upon the country, to play the devil, just as if they were good Protestants." He laughed heartily at this sally, and was much pleased with my open, fearless candour. He introduced me to some institution, club, or reading-room, where there were newspapers in plenty, and some books; and a very nice place it was. When he first took me, some gentleman asked him, if I was a friend to Ireland? He answered: "Yes! a true friend!" And then he told the people present what I had said concerning Chancery Lane. They did not treat me the worse for it. On the contrary, I fancied they seemed pleased, proud, elated; that everybody who heard it felt himself a foot taller on finding that he had the happiness to live in an age which had produced one thorough contemner of humbug. My friendly guide carried his kindness so far as to send me every day at dinner time, wet from the press, a Dublin Evening Paper. I read it faithfully after dinner, because he wished me to read it, and because he always examined me in its contents the next morning. It treated of politics, about which I cared little, and chiefly of Irish politics, about which I cared nothing. I told him it was ably written, and so indeed it was.

"Had I met with anything I disapproved of in the paper?"

"Nothing whatever."

He said to me at parting, "Now that you have read something about our Irish grievances, tell me frankly your opinion of them?"

"What I have read has entirely confirmed the only opinion which I ever formed of the whole matter, that the Devil may mend it, if he will; for full sure nobody else can!"

He spoke frequently of Bysshe, and with uniform, unvarying kindness and respect; and so spoke all in Dublin, who had ever seen him, in a handsome, liberal, and gentlemanlike manner. This unanimity was a real and solid gratification to me; and another tribute of regard was still more pleasing: to me, a young man, it was delightful to hear my friend, a young man, named and remembered with marked and distinguished favour, for his good looks, by females, themselves eminently good-looking. They discoursed, with a due discrimination of colours, of the locks of dark brown hair shading an intellectual and inspired countenance.

And let it be remarked, by the way, that persons who had never seen Shelley, or were incapable of correctly distinguishing hues and shades of colour, have sometimes erroneously assigned to him "golden hair;" it was of a dark brown, without a

tinge of red, or yellow; there was no more gold in his hair, than there usually was in the poor fellow's pocket.

I was often warmly recommended to go on to Killarney; the lake and country were well worth a visit; no doubt they were, possibly even in the month of March. My friends would be charmed to see me; they would, certainly. I should be quite sure to find them there; this, at least, was doubtful; and one such a wildgoose chace as I had just indulged in was sufficient sport for one season.

I breakfasted on a Sunday morning somewhere, in order to see at one glance all the fashionable society in Dublin; and for this purpose they conducted me to a chapel, where the most popular preacher in the capital officiated, and all persons of fashion congregated to listen to his eloquence. The orator spoke that affected, mincing dialect, which is but too commonly in use amongst the upper classes in Ireland, which is always painful to English ears, and sometimes absolutely intolerable: the fashionable world had a mean and poverty-stricken aspect. A conspicuous, glaring poverty pervaded the whole city. I never once met a woman in the streets with silk stockings, although I walked about everywhere; and by riding in jaunting-cars and gingells in windy weather, the daughters of Erin lost no opportunity of exhibiting

their millposts to an unprejudiced and observant stranger; I should have seen their silk stockings, if they had been worth a pair.

I saw very few pretty women here, and they were all in the upper classes; the lower orders were hard-featured and ugly, without one exception. I never saw so few good-looking females in a large city. In Naples the women were for the most part plain, but not ugly, as they too commonly were in Dublin.

The Theatre Royal, in Crowe Street, is a sorry building for the chief, or the only theatre of a capital city; my active guide conducted me to it on a fashionable evening. Change, the door-keeper could not give; an I O U could not be taken there, but my conductor pledged his sacred word of honour for me at the door. The pledge was accepted, and I was admitted to the dress-boxes. The beau monde looked rather seedy; the all-pervading poverty was apparent here as elsewhere: there was not merely a want of small change, but a want of money. The play was King John; the part of Lady Constance was filled by Miss O'Neil. I have frequently witnessed that lady's performance subsequently in London with admiration and delight: she was already a great celebrity in Dublin, but, I confess, I was much less struck by her acting than perhaps I ought to have been. The character is

not effective; possibly it did not suit her; and to say the truth, like everything else in Ireland, she had been puffed so outrageously, that the excessive praise which had been dinned into my ears, indisposed me to perceive and acknowledge her real merit. Everything besides, which I had hitherto seen, had disappointed me so much, and had fallen so very short of the extravagant laudation heaped upon it, that the mind was weary of being balked, and was fatigued with constant shortcomings.

The boasted Sackville Street and the bepraised squares were certainly handsome; yet they had a dull, deserted look. The Vice-regal Castle was but a shabby Lincoln's Inn. Sir John Stevenson played well on the organ; and the monument of Jonathan Swift is undoubtedly genuine; nevertheless, for an archiepiscopal cathedral, St. Patrick's is a mean, dirty, dismal church.

At Trinity College the buildings are handsome and commodious; but to eyes accustomed to the neatness, the propriety, the elegance with which the several colleges in the University of Oxford are kept and garnished, its neglected air bespeaks a workhouse; and in comparison with the smart, well-dressed, gentleman-like undergraduates, my former associates, the young hopes of Hibernia, however promising intrinsically, seemed outwardly

a buttonless, stringless, ragged lot. There was a noble library, I was assured, containing many rare and valuable MSS., and a vast collection of printed books; but I was also assured, and doubtless with equal truth, that it was useless to visit it, for it was in the utmost disorder and confusion.

The Bank of Ireland alone, formerly the House of Parliament, deserved all the commendations poured out lavishly over it. Of all the infinite gasconades this alone is just and well-founded, that the important business of banking is not, and cannot be, carried on in a more magnificent structure in any other city. The small currency of Ireland had long consisted almost entirely of the notes of provincial banks for sums under the value of one pound; of bank notes for a crown, and, if I mistake not, for I never saw a specimen of this paper money, for half-a-crown. All these notes, the sole medium of small payments just before my arrival in Dublin, had been unadvisedly, inconsiderately, and wickedly, withdrawn suddenly and totally from circulation before any substitute was introduced. The inconvenience and confusion created by this rash proceeding are not to be described. How long the curse continued to afflict and desolate the country I know not: during my short visit, it was at the highest point. This execrable interdict upon all ordinary dealings does

not appear to have met with adequate reprehension; or that the stocks, the pillory, and the whipping-post, the well-merited chastisements of political economists, so foolish and mischievous, were brought vigorously into requisition. The holders of my I O U's became numerous, and sometimes they were uneasy; they seemed to be apprehensive, that I meditated flight. I could only offer a pound note to any one who would undertake to get it changed; but that was impossible. So whenever my securities happened to be looked upon with disfavour in the Dublin money market, they pressed me with clamorous, but never uncivil, or disrespectful, importunity.

The driver of the car assured me, probably with perfect veracity, that he wanted a bit of bread for his babes, shoes and food for his horse, his wife, or himself; and he earnestly besought me, for the sake of the Holy Virgin, the blessed Mother of God, just to take up my I O U. In my urgent distress I applied to my very obliging acquaintance. Surely there were bankers, merchants, in a large city, from whom a few pounds' worth of silver might be procured. He assured me that the thing was impracticable; and he adopted a palliative, which was national, characteristic, and effectual, at least for my personal relief, but not altogether in accordance with my feelings and wishes. This was his

hunting-whip; with the doubled thong at first, when my creditors were near at hand, and afterwards, when they began to retreat, with the point of the lash, he procured for me temporary accommodation, forbearance and relief. He was a thoroughly good-natured fellow, and he did more towards clearing the ground, by cracking his formidable whip, than by actually striking the clamorous applicants who pursued and hunted me about. Sometimes he would apostrophize them in this fashion:—

"You dirty villains, what do you mean? Is this your hospitality? The good gentleman has come from London expressly to redress the wrongs of Ireland, and you torment him in' this manner! Take yourselves off, you dirty blackguards!"

In addition to the pursuit of my daily increasing creditors, I was constantly followed by a troop of ragged, squalid beggars. It was a novelty to hear women asking charity, for the sake of the Holy Virgin, of the Mother of God, of the blessed Mary, the mother of the sweet Jaysus.

I remained a week or ten days in Dublin. I had visited every place that was reputed to be worthy of a visit. I never was in a town of the same dimensions in which there was so little to be seen.

I had not received any intelligence from Killarney, although I had written to my friends, and I was not inclined to pursue them farther. I brought with

me money enough to pay my journey to Dublin, and back again to London, with a small reserve for contingencies. This was almost consumed, and it appeared to be prudent, and on all accounts desirable, to return home. But I could not discover how this was to be done, without discharging my debts, and that seemed to be absolutely impossible. I consulted my obliging Mentor, and he kindly proposed that I should leave the amount of my outstanding debts with him in notes, and he would undertake to discharge every I O U, as soon as silver money could be obtained.

Accordingly we had a meeting of my creditors,—an audit; the holders of securities were very accommodating. I gave the auditor the total amount, and when the day of payment arrived he could discharge all my obligations, and give every man his own.

I determined to return by another and preferable route, and I took an outside place to London by the Shrewsbury mail. I sailed on a fine afternoon by the Post-Office Packet, from the Pigeon House; the vessel was not crowded as before, and I slept soundly on a sofa in the cabin. When I awoke in the morning, I saw a Scotch gentleman seated at a small table with a fine cold fowl before him, and a large loaf. He civilly asked me to assist him in eating his provisions. I felt hungry, certainly, but I also felt and expressed some scruples at diminishing his

stock; and I honestly told him that I had not the means of repaying him, if he should run short, as I had no sea-stores. He answered: "There was no fear of that; we should land in half an hour, and if I went on deck for a minute, I should have a fine view of the Head." The morning was sunny and bright; the sight of the desired port is always pleasant, and I found the prospect lovely and exhilarating. When I went down again into the cabin, my share of the fowl was on a plate before me. I had no time to lose, he said, and I did not lose my time. We made a hasty meal, commending, as was most due, the excellence of Irish poultry. My entertainer complained bitterly of the disorder and confusion which reigned universally in Ireland; of the utter want of punctuality in business, and of other defects, which must be peculiarly odious and inconvenient to an exact, precise, and formal Scotchman. I felt these deficiencies very sensibly myself; and yet, to say the truth, I quitted the Green Isle with regret; I liked it with all its faults, and I acknowledged that if circumstances should require it, I should not be altogether sorry to make my residence there: because it was an aristocratical country; every feeling, to the back bone, and to the heart's core, was aristocratical; I had seen that a gentleman is always treated in Ireland like a gentleman, and that to live well there it is only necessary to be a gentleman, and to behave

like one. He shook his head at this, and affirmed that my feeling in favour of aristocracy was narrow, vulgar, selfish, unfounded, ignorant; "and, I must add, young gentleman, although I say it with pain, a most highly reprehensible prejudice." I held steadily to my principles, and I added, "The little which I have seen of Wales, I liked much, and for the same reasons,—that also is an aristocratical country; quite as much so as Ireland."

"Oh! my good sir; the Welsh, as a nation, are in the very lowest state of human degradation!"

"Yet they boast that they alone, of all nations, have never been conquered."

"Precisely so! and for a very plain reason;—because they were not worth conquering; and if they merit anything at our hands, it can be nothing more than total extermination!"

I was not to be put down, so I went on: "I have not seen much of Scotland, but I liked what I saw there, for there likewise is a decided leaning towards aristocracy."

At this remark, he immediately changed his note: "And so you liked Scotland! Oh! that is a fine country! There you see civilisation at the highest pitch! What a noble race of men! So you really liked Scotland? Well, it is a powerful, an irresistible argument in favour of your good sense, my young friend, that you liked Scotland!"

The conversation was interrupted by an order to get into the boat. We embarked, and my patriotic acquaintance took his place by my side, lecturing, as we neared the shore, on the pre-eminence of Scotland, and inquiring with interest what parts of that country I had seen; and at the moment of landing he said: "If you love social refinement, you must lose no time in visiting Glasgow!"

The mail was ready to start; I mounted upon the roof, the box being already occupied. As soon as I was seated, with a smack of the whip and a blast of the horn we bid adieu to Holyhead. We recrossed Mona, and came to Bangor Ferry, where, at a charming inn, and for a moderate charge, we had ample time fo enjoy an excellent repast. We passed propitiously the Menai Straits; the marine river was now as bright, as calm, as smiling, as it had before appeared gloomy, rough, and threatening. I hastened from the boat to regain my watch-tower near the skies. The afternoon was clear and sunny. We proceeded onwards to Capel Cerrig. No language can describe the beauty and majesty of the scene which I now beheld, perched on the roof of the coach: Snowdon and the magnificent chain of lofty mountains filled me with admiration and delight. I was now amply repaid, overpaid for all my labours, and sufferings, and disappointments.

My return to London was as auspicious in every

respect, as my journey to Dublin had been cruel and terrible. The service of the mail and the accommodations for passengers were as convenient and satisfactory by this route, as on that by Chester they had been comfortless and disgusting.

The weather was favourable all the way; the nights cold, but serene and fine: my friend's blanket coat, which had proved useless, or rather mischievous, in heavy and incessant rain, was now sovereign, and kept me as warm as I wished to be. I arrived at the General Post Office in London in due course, upon the whole much gratified by my fortnight's tour to the sister island; by my hasty visit to my little sister, Cinderbreech, to the poor snubbed and slighted Cinderella. For some days after my arrival in Dublin, I felt as if I should never be warm again, and when I laid my hand upon my flesh my body struck cold as marble; but by degrees the chill departed, the natural heat returned, and I suffered no lasting inconvenience. Amongst many other advantages, which I derived from my journey, one of the most striking was the marked difference in tone, with which my Irish acquaintances spoke to me of their own glorious land, when they were informed of my actual personal inspection of it. One of the boldest boasters said to me meekly on my return :—

"You could not fail to remark, that as they p.int

everything in London, so they paint nothing in Dublin; and that it would be quite as difficult to find a broken window-shutter in London and the neighbourhood, as it would be to find a whole one in, or near, the proud metropolis of Ireland." To have learned fully to appreciate in all its bearings this candid and judicious remark is surely not to have travelled in vain!

CORK HOTEL, DUBLIN, *March* 31, 1813.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

We have just arrived in Dublin:—had you remained here but one day, you would have seen us. We travelled night and day, from the receipt of your note. My Harriet insisted on accompanying me. Her spirits, and the hope of seeing you here, supported her through two days and nights of hard travelling: 240 English miles.

You falsely supposed, that her note was in answer to your's. We did not receive your's until Monday noon. On Monday evening we began travelling on Irish roads with Irish horses and chaise. We reached Cork at one the next day, took the mail, and to-day, Wednesday, at three o'clock arrived. We shall soon be with you in London; Eliza and our servant remain at Killarney.

You ought not to accuse me of reserve towards

you. It is the inconceivable blindness and matter of fact stupidity of Lawless, that deserve your reprehension; but had you staid one day longer, you would have heard the words of sincerity and friendship from my own lips. As soon as I shall consider the fatigue as overcome, I shall come to London. I must by some means raise money for the journey here, but I am not one to stick at difficulties.

Do not write to us here. We shall be on our way before your letter could arrive.

Harriet unites in kind remembrances.

Your very sincere friend,

PERCY B. S.

Harriet will write to-morrow.

To T. J. H.

DUBLIN, *April* 3, 1813.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I wrote yesterday before I had seen Lawless, under the one and only impression of disappointment at not meeting you here. That, however, shall speedily be remedied. I have raised a small sum of money, and to-morrow evening we embark for Holyhead.

I have been very much pleased at what Lawless has said of you. The first ten words he spoke

entirely dissipated all the ill-humour I had cherished against him. He had done what I could not conceive any one, who dined with you, could have neglected. He had been open with you.

Of course you will not write to us here. Above all do not send, or dream of procuring for us any money; we will do those matters well. The property of friends at least is in common. On Monday evening we shall be in London.

I write from Lawless's. I am very much pleased and flattered by his account of you.

Harriet is quite well. She writes to-day.

My dear friend, all happiness attend you.

Yours affectionately,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

[*No date.*]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We have just arrived. We are now at 23, Chapel Street, but will see you, or write to-morrow morning.

Yours affectionately,

P. B. S.

To T. J. H.

35, GREAT COFFE STREET, DUBLIN,
May 3, 1813.

DEAR SIR,

I take the liberty of troubling you with these

few lines to be informed by you, how our good friends the Shelleys are, from whom I have heard but once since they left this country. I did flatter myself with a letter from my friend long before this, and now begin to apprehend some serious cause for his not writing. I hope no such cause has interposed, and if not, you will much oblige me by telling him, how anxious both Mrs. Lawless and I are to hear from him and Mrs. Shelley. I suppose Miss Westbrook has long since arrived with you.

I remain,

Your very humble Servant,

JOHN LAWLESS.

To T. J. H.

(*First Indorsement.*)

SUNDAY MORNING.

DEAR HARRIET,

I am very sorry that Bysshe is unwell. It is hard that his heart should be so good, and his head so bad: I wish you had as much influence over the latter as over the former. Mr. Lawless has had the goodness to send me the paper, on which I write. Bysshe will answer him. I met Mr. and Mrs. N., as I returned last night; they ordered me to tell you, that they would take tea with you this evening. Adieu!

Yours truly,

T. J. H.

To Mrs. Shelley.

(*Second Indorsement.*)

Bysshe is better now, and wishes for your company this evening, at eight o'clock, to meet the N——s.

HARRIET.

To T. J. H.

CHAPTER X.

A DAY or two after my return to London, I received a letter from Dublin, and, after a like brief interval, another letter from the same place, and presently afterwards a short scrawl, without a date, announcing the arrival of my friends in town, at the house of Harriet's father. There appeared to have been a misunderstanding on both sides, and at all hands, but how it arose I could never comprehend at the time; and it would be vain indeed to attempt now to discover its source.

I found Bysshe and Harriet in a hotel at the West End: they were both well, and in good spirits; the lady was as bright, blooming, and placid as ever. They expressed much regret at my fruitless expedition, and most kindly condoled with me. I had made a long and energetic, although not an agreeable journey; nevertheless, there is a certain pleasure in energy and exertion; and I had enjoyed the advantage of seeing something of Wales, and much of Dublin; so, being reconciled to my lot, I

was in a condition to act as a comforter towards them. They complained bitterly of the fatigue, expense, and hideous improbity of their long and barbarous course. Their wearied souls were brimful of the recollections of discomfort and miseries endured at Killarney; where, that they might be more thoroughly wretched, they had occupied a cottage situated upon an island in the lake. I write hesitatingly, for I never saw Killarney myself, or visited the county of Kerry; and their descriptions were not graphic, or even precise. The climate is mild, but the weather rainy and stormy; beyond belief and conception stormy.

Bysshe discoursed with animation and eloquent astonishment of the perilous navigation of the lakes; of sudden gusts and treacherous whirlwinds. How vessels were swamped and sunk in a moment; and he related with implicit faith tales savouring somewhat of Milesian exaggeration and credulity. How a boat had sometimes been caught up out of the water by a storm, carried bodily on shore, and deposited at a distance from the margin of the lake.

I could not make out why they had gone a second time to Ireland; there was no political object as before; in truth, they did not know the reason themselves, and could not therefore inform me. Something was said about its being a change: it

would have been a change to have gone to Nova Zembla, but hardly a more prudent or pleasant one. It might well be, that some glowing description of a beautiful locality from the lips, or in the pages, of a picturesque tourist caught the vivid imagination of the Divine Poet, and determined him on the instant to seek, forgetful of all other considerations and of every previous subsisting engagement, a perpetual asylum in a terrestrial paradise; to betake himself, as fast as post-horses or the mail coach could convey him, to the south-western corner of Ireland, that he might settle at Killarney "for ever." If the irresistible delusion was sudden, it was as suddenly dispelled, for certainly the spell was broken, the fascination was at an end; he had awakened completely from his dream of fairy-land.

He had taken, or sent, a considerable number of books to the happy cottage on the blissful lake; many useful volumes collected in the solitude of Tanyrallt, and for which he had so earnestly written to his correspondent in London. When he started off hastily to overtake me in Dublin, or to join me in London, he had left Eliza in charge of his library. He was evidently weary of angelic guardianship, and exulted with a malicious pleasure that he had fairly planted her at last. He made no secret of his satisfaction, but often gave vent to his feelings with his accustomed frankness and energy.

The good Harriet smiled in silence, and looked very sly; she did not dare to express her joy, if she really rejoiced at the absence of her affectionate and tiresome sister, by uttering treasons against her liege lady, the defender of her nerves. The deliverance was of brief duration,—surprisingly brief, for in an incredibly short space of time Eliza reappeared and resumed her sovereign functions. They remained for some time at hotels, and during this period Eliza was with them, mute, smiling and languishing as before. Whether she lived constantly with them I was not exactly informed; it seemed rather, that she went and came in a hushed, mystical manner. However, she was often present when I visited them, but retired frequently to her bedroom, probably to brush her hair assiduously as of old. Whenever she joined us, she displayed the same painful interest in Harriet's nerves; their condition was authoritatively pronounced to be shattered and deplorable; and when she deigned to wonder at anything, she wondered what Miss Warne would say. On some days she was unquestionably absent; and then, perhaps, she had gone to hold a chaste conference with her virgin friend respecting the nervous system, and actually to hear what the oracle said.

Harriet gave visible promise of being about to provide an heir for an ancient and illustrious

house; and, like all little women, she looked very large upon the occasion. She was in excellent voice, and fonder than ever of reading aloud; she promptly seized every opportunity of indulging her taste: she took up the first book that came to hand as soon as I entered the room, and the reading commenced. Sir William Drummond's Academical Questions, Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, some of Bishop Berkeley's Works, Southey's Chronicle of the Cid, had taken the place of Telemachus, Belisarius, Volney's Ruins, and the other works, which she had formerly read to me. Whenever Eliza made a descent upon us, silence was immediately proclaimed, and the book was carried away.

"Dearest Harriet, what are you about? Only consider the state of your poor nerves! Think of your condition! You are killing yourself as fast as you can; you are, indeed, dear! Gracious heaven! What would Miss Warne say?"

I dined with my young friends one day at a hotel in Dover Street. Bysshe was to go somewhere with all haste,—a common occurrence with him,—to perform, or to procure, something mysterious and prodigious. He could hardly be prevailed upon to take his dinner; he restrained his impatience until our meal was finished, and whilst the waiter was removing the cloth, he sprang on his feet,

snatched up his hat and ran away, leaving me alone with Harriet. We sat and conversed for awhile; she probably was wishing for the moment, when with a decent and proper regard for the paramount duty of digestion, she might begin to read aloud.

Before the desired moment came, Dr. S. was announced, and a quiet Quaker physician quickly entered the room, his hat upon his head, and a bland smile upon his countenance. I rose instantly to depart, but the doctor seized my arm, and made me sit down again. I felt uneasy, but believing that he took me for the husband of the lady whom he attended, I was about to inform him that I was not, when Harriet interposed:

"You need not go away! Dr. S. does not desire it, I am sure. He rather wishes you to stay!"

My position seemed delicate and distressing, but it was not so. The Doctor seated himself over against his blooming young patient, and rather near to her, looking at her fixedly; the bland smile was still upon his countenance, and the ample hat was still upon his head. Nothing was said, either by the lady or by her dumb physician.

Twice, or thrice, the latter murmured softly and inarticulately.

The mute consultation continued about ten minutes, and terminated abruptly. When he had

satiated his eyes, and satisfied the demands of science by gazing silently, Dr. S. started suddenly from his chair, as if something had stung him behind, and with a celerity hardly natural in a Quaker, quitted the room, carefully closing the door after him. Harriet appeared to be relieved at being delivered from his silent, searching eye.

"Well! You see there was no necessity for your going away; not the least in the world. You might very well stay! It was Bysshe's wish that Dr. S. should see me, and he has seen me!"

Dr. John S. was a very distinguished member of the Society of Friends; he was eminent as a botanist, and eminent likewise as a ladies' physician. The speechless individuals of the vegetable kingdom did not require him to talk to them; he might arrange them, and distinguish their several species in the most profound silence. But the success of so taciturn a doctor with animated nature, with natures very animated, with patients who love to speak and to be spoken to, especially on those interesting occasions, to which his extensive practice was chiefly directed, was certainly remarkable. I have been told that he would attend a female through the whole affair without once uttering a single word, even in a protracted and difficult case. It was wonderful how the charming, prattling sex could endure such mute ministrations; how a nice talkative

young lady could ever bear to be put, not chattily to bed, but drily, like a specimen of a woman, into a herbarium, or hortus siccus; and as though, in truth, she was not more than many flowers! I have sometimes thought that his numerous patients imagined that the doctor must speak at last; that some day or other, sooner or later, he would say something; and then, what in the world would it be? And that the hope of being the fortunate holder of the prize ticket consoled them for his obstinate silence, and supported them under it. To hear eventually the secret of secrets would be a full compensation for the pains and perils of child-birth; for all the preceding apprehensions and inconveniences; for all succeeding sufferings and maladies; for a tedious confinement; for the sorrows of suckling; for blighted hopes and bitter bereavements; nay, even for the attendance of a dumb accoucheur! Woman is Nature's master-piece, as well as that of Aristotle; and when the very observing doctor's close and varied examination of strange and astonishing things, continued moreover without intermission for many years, should transpire at last, being clothed in appropriate language, the full and final disclosure of the sleek, sly, silent Quaker would at once atone for a whole life of the strictest reticence!

Dr. John S. doubtless made his observations on

the lovely Harriet, but he did not communicate them. During the sole interview I ever had with our valued Friend, not one drop of the grand secret oozed out.

Shelley continued to reside for some weeks at hotels; some persons blamed such a course as imprudent, and moreover as being expensive, but his motives were discreet and rational. Next August he would be of age. It was confidently asserted, and generally believed, that his father would then come to a satisfactory and proper arrangement. It was thought that a hotel was more convenient for negotiations than lodgings. His father, it was said, would pay his debts, of which the amount was inconsiderable, and make him a moderate, permanent, and suitable allowance.

For some two years I had seen but little of Bysshe, but from this epoch it was my good fortune to see a great deal of him, and to enjoy, off and on, much of the unappreciable pleasure and advantage of his most precious society and familiar and friendly intercourse. Having consumed many valuable hours in the dull diplomacy of his father's agents, and finding the residence at a hotel, a place where the Muses do not haunt, unfavourable to study, and to assembling a goodly fellowship of ancient books round him, he took lodgings in Half-Moon-Street. I went one day, by invitation, to dine

with him there, and on arriving I found Harriet alone.

"Bysshe called on the Duke of Norfolk this morning, who asked him to dinner, and it would have been improper to have refused. He has just gone, but he will come to us as soon as he can get away."

Harriet and myself dined together, and had tea; and after tea Harriet was reading aloud to me, as she was wont to do. Her reading was abruptly put an end to by vehement and well-known rapping; Shelley came tumbling up stairs, with a mighty sound, treading upon his nose, as I accused him of doing, rushed into the room, and throwing off his neckcloth, according to custom, stood staring around for some moments, as wondering why he had been in such a hurry. He informed us that there was a large party of men at Norfolk House; he sat near the bottom of the table, and the Earl of Oxford sat next to him. After dinner, the Earl said to him,—

"Pray, who is that very strange old man at the top of the table, sitting next to His Grace, who talks so much, so loudly, and in so extraordinary a manner, and all about himself?

"He is my father, and he is a very strange old man indeed! The Earl said no more on that head, but we continued to chat together, and he walked with me from St. James's-Square. I have just left him at the door."

Feelings of sympathy and antipathy are various and manifest. Bysshe appeared to be pleased with the Earl of Oxford, because he disliked his father. I did not know the Earl, but I was so fortunate as to meet his lovely and fashionable Countess occasionally, and I was soon able to discover that we had one point of sympathy and strong common feeling,—an intense abhorrence of bores.

The first time I met this admired lady was at a conference of wise men and wise women,—a conversation party; the term, an evening's work, soirèe, was not then in use. Some philosophers were discussing at length, and in a sufficiently tiresome manner, about the locality of the Garden of Eden; concerning the true situation of the terrestrial Paradise. Lady Oxford plainly showed her sense of extreme weariness by gaping and yawning aloud, quite unreservedly, as she would sometimes do, like one who was deemed above ordinances. When there was a pause in the conversation, being encouraged, perhaps, by the lady's oscitancy, I ventured to say,—

"I believe I know exactly where Paradise is situated?"

"Where?" asked some one shortly, and in a tone which seemed to imply,—"what can you know about the matter?"

I answered, "It is certainly in Cranbourne Alley; for there so many pretty faces may be seen flitting

about the bonnet-shops on a fine day, that it is impossible to believe Paradise can be anywhere else." The philosophers appeared to be disgusted at my impertinence; but the lovely Countess took me by the hand, and always treated me with much kindness.

Another evening, the whole party was sentimental, and each person present, in turn, pathetically selected some favoured spot in which it would be sweet to be buried. Some romantic churchyard in Wales was chosen, or a secluded nook in the district of the English Lakes. The church was to be small, old, overgrown with moss, and shaded with ivy. There were to be ancient trees, yews in particular, and nightingales were to sing in them. There must be a crystal brook near at hand, flowing with a gentle murmur,—a babbling brook. The ground must not be moist and marshy, nor the situation low, but light, sandy soil, on a moderate acclivity, was preferred; for to lie dry is thought comfortable, even after death.

"You have not told us, Sir, where you would like to be buried," the Countess said to me, although she had not fixed upon her own sepulchre. "You are too young to have thought much about it. Perhaps you have not made up your mind?"

"I have thought about it; I have made up my mind, quite."

"Where is it to be, then, will you tell us?"

"Certainly. For my part, I should choose to be buried under the kerb-stone, before the door of the most fashionable milliner in London; it would be no mean consolation to know that the prettiest feet and ankles in the world were stepping backwards and forwards into and out of carriages, all day long, over my head." In those days we had feet and ankles; we showed them freely, and never supposed that there was any harm in it. We were naked, it is true, but being innocent, we were not ashamed; indeed, we did not even know that we were naked. In those days, also, there was a visible, sensible difference, a marked diversity, in the forms of females; now all are made alike, and in the similitude of champagne bottles; and as for feet and ankles, for anything that appears to the contrary, ladies now-a-days are moved about upon casters, like easy-chairs and tables.

The latter sally was not more displeasing than the former one; but I am not writing the history of my own life and times, but the biography of a Divine Poet, to the illustration of whose remarkable character alone every word should tend. In the year 1810 I went home for the long vacation, travelling to the North of England on the outside of coaches. The first of these was a Birmingham coach, which stopt to breakfast at Stratford-on-Avon, where I had

never been before. I willingly forfeited my breakfast that I might see Shakspeare's House. I saw it; and the church being open, I saw the tomb also, and the celebrated bust, with its high forehead; and by hard running I got back to the coach just in time to regain my airy seat.

My fellow collegians and travelling companions laughed at my enthusiasm, a frame of mind in little favour at that time in our ancient University.

"How did you like your breakfast?"

I got nothing to eat until dinner at Birmingham!

"You will surely be a poet yourself!"

I am not a poet; but I am the biographer of a Divine Poet, whose acquaintance I had the good fortune to make on my return to Oxford in the following October. It may be, that familiarity with an illustrious poet must always be purchased by some sacrifices; by the loss of a breakfast at the least!

Bysshe, as has been asserted already, and will be declared again and again, was invariably an especial favourite of the fair sex; he was cherished as the apple of beauty's eye; he was often called by names of endearment, as Ariel, Oberon, and spoken of by the ladies of his acquaintance as the Elfin King, the King of Faery, and under other affectionate titles. Elegant society was deemed to be his proper element, to adorn which appeared to be his

natural vocation; to bring him into it, and to keep him in it, was the anxious care of several amiable and charming creatures at the present crisis of his life. It was thought desirable to procure for him an introduction to the Countess of Oxford, in order that her wise and gentle influence might perchance make him less unlike other people, and bring about a certain reasonable compliance with received usages. With this view, he was mentioned to her by several of his female friends, and she was well disposed towards him, greatly interested in him, and inclined to admit him amongst her acquaintances. She asked many questions concerning the young poet, and spoke of him, not merely with curiosity, but with kindness and regard. These benevolent intentions did not lead to any practical results; they were frustrated chiefly by the departure from England of this distinguished lady, who went with her family to reside at Cagliari.

John Horne Tooke was at this time the oracle of the liberal section of literary society; his testimony was cited in favour of the ingenious Countess. Discoursing one day of learned ladies and women of talent, the Philosopher of Wimbledon, as he was sometimes styled, declared that he had never known a woman of talent. The best of them, he said, are mere parrots; they repeat what they have heard, but without understanding it: if what they repeat

happens to be clever, although it is not their own, and if it be really clever, it never is, they obtain credit for a degree of cleverness to which they are not entitled. But when I say I never met with a woman of real talent, I must, in justice, make one exception, and that is Lady Oxford. He then cited some of the excepted lady's smart sayings, which he proved to be original and spontaneous; and demonstrated that they could not possibly have been learned by rote. I have forgotten these proofs and instances; but I remember that I inquired with some solicitude, whether the cynic, for such surely he must be accounted, had ever been in company with the daughter of Neckar? but I could not make out how that was. Whether the morose sentence included the most celebrated Blue of the age, or perhaps of any age, amongst the hen parrots; whether Corinna herself was but a talking bird, a "Blue bird!" Lively, agreeable, and good-natured conversations I well recollect; but no profound observations,—nothing likely to throw into the shade the Proverbs of Solomon, or the Precepts of the Seven Wise Men of Greece.

The pompous Dr. Parr at one period puffed this distinguished lady most vigorously; but his judgment was less sober, his evidence less truthful and worthy to be relied on, than the decision of the author of "Winged Words!" Notwithstanding all

his efforts, the Reverend Doctor Samuel Parr could not get himself made a bishop: in order, therefore, to spite the more fortunate Lords Spiritual and their archdeacons, he took it into his head to wear the cassock, which he maintained is, according to the canons, the proper dress of a priest. It is also generally worn at the two Universities, but never there without the gown, as he wore it: moreover, the pushing priest, in his canonical costume, had the satisfaction, such as it was, of passing for a bishop in the streets, and with strangers. The doctor was in full flower at that time—covered with bloom, indeed; puffing himself, and being puffed, parading and praising himself at every point of the compass. The singularity of his clerical vesture attracted much observation and continual criticism: it might be in accordance with the canons of the church, of which nobody knew anything, but it was contrary to long-established usage, and with this all the world was acquainted.

The Countess openly threatened to ask him, why he alone of priests wore the proper and peculiar dress of priesthood; but she was assured that it was a delicate inquiry, a sore point, and he must not be spoken to on the subject. However, she had betted five guineas, it was reported, that she would publicly ask him, why he wore the cassock. Despising all friendly cautions, and in defiance of

warnings and admonitions, she boldly persevered in her contumacious design.

"Pray, Dr. Parr, how long have you taken to wear petticoats?" she said to him one day at a large dinner-party.

There was no answer, and the company laughed; and thereupon the audacious lady triumphantly repeated the question in a louder voice.

"Ever since your ladyship has taken to wear the breeches!"

She won her bet, certainly; but she earned her five guineas!

Whether this anecdote be strictly true, I know not: it was current at the time, and pretty generally credited: if it be not true, it is at least not ill found.

With respect to the famous cassock, I not only saw it several times, but I once wore it myself for an hour or more,—a distinction which few persons can boast.

A clever artist, with whom I had some acquaintance, was employed to take a likeness of Sam. Parr. He had already made considerable progress in his work; what he had done was most satisfactory to himself, to the Doctor, and to his numerous friends; and he was extremely anxious to complete the portrait with equal success.

"The Doctor is not a good sitter: he is very

restless, and unless he has somebody to talk to him and amuse him, I cannot keep him quiet; and then I do not get on with my work so well as I desire. I am unable to converse with him myself. Will you come and talk to him at his next sitting? You will do me a great favour—a real kindness!"

The next sitting had been fixed for the following Sunday, for the Doctor's stay in town was limited. I went to breakfast with the painter.

"The Reverend Doctor has promised to sit this morning for two or three hours, during the time of divine service. You must not tell at what time he sat; so mighty a pillar of the church would not like that it should be known; indeed, he charged me particularly not to mention it to anybody; but he will not mind you, I am sure!"

After breakfast the bells struck up, calling the sheep together into the fold; the good shepherd came to us punctually. The immortal editor of the immortal "Bellendenus" was conducted straight to the painting room, and we joined him there immediately. He was not at all displeased at seeing me, but snook hands cordially, and was in high good humour; and, to say the truth, he always appeared to me to be a thoroughly good-natured, kind-hearted old man. He pointed out the fire in the short clay pipe held in the hand, and extolled the felicity with which the burning tobacco was represented,

enlarging greatly upon that theme. The artist smiled.

"That is not a very difficult feat of art, I believe?"

"Not at all," said the painter; "but what do you think of the likeness?"

"It is admirable—perfect!"

And so in very truth it was; absurdly, ridiculously like, and yet a pleasing picture. The visage was required to be tauriform,—as much like a bull as possible, only without horns, and in that respect, therefore, unlike Moses or Bacchus, or a bull, and like the Doctor.

The learned sitter arrayed himself in his canonicals, mounted the raised chair, was placed in proper attitude and light, and the work of imitation duly advanced.

It was easy to talk with Dr. Parr, for he loved to have all the talk to himself, and to lay down the law: however, he desired to be understood, and he expected to meet with attention; and, indeed, his conversation deserved it. His discourse was always worth listening to, and instructive, more or less: it cannot be denied that, for good taste, he spoke too much of himself. Having ascertained from his watch that people must be coming out of church, he took off his gown and departed suddenly, and somewhat sooner than was expected.

I was requested to take his place for a little while, and accordingly I put on the cassock that had been sent to be worn by the painter's lay figure; the light fell at that moment, it was said, in an agreeable manner upon the drapery about the knees; the effect ought not to be lost, for, in the language consecrated to art, it was rich and happy.

The worthy and most laborious artist told me, whilst I was sitting in proper priestly costume as proxy for a reverend priest, that the great Sir Joshua Reynolds had said, that no painter had ever attained to eminence, who looked upon Sunday as a holiday; and that, for his part, he always worked particularly hard on that day. He then discoursed of Dr. Parr with admiration, and with admiration still more profound of my friend Shelley; how much he desired that these two wonderful men should meet; how much he wished to be present at their meeting, and to listen to their exquisite conversation! I have heard in other quarters of the project of bringing the old Grecian and the young Poet into personal communication; but it was not a promising one.

Sam. Parr's delight was to dogmatize,—to have everything entirely his own way; he had no relish for any companion who doubted his absolute infallibility. Besides, a Whig divine is placed in a very critical

position, between two fires; he has to try to make his way, to creep, to the paradise of a bishopric,—a long and narrow bridge, narrow as the edge of a razor; he must not compromise his orthodoxy on the one hand, or his liberality on the other. Bysshe, on his side, had no inclination for the society of a pedagogue; an invitation to come and converse familiarly with a schoolmaster, how illustrious soever, would appear too like a summons to return to Eton, and have an agreeable chat with old Keate, whom his soul abhorred; too like bidding him to cross the great gulph of eternal separation, and to commune again with the Big Wigs of Oxford, for whom he very naturally had conceived an intense hatred, mingled with well-merited and unmitigated contempt. And so the friendly conference with the Reverend Doctor Samuel Parr never came off!

In London, Bysshe found books and society, and he appeared to rejoice in being delivered from the long-endured, intolerable loneliness of Wales: the good Harriet also rejoiced, and was bright, blooming, calm, and composed, as heretofore; but she had not renounced her eternal purpose of suicide; and she still discoursed of some scheme of self-destruction, as coolly as another lady would arrange a visit to an exhibition or a theatre. She told me sometimes that she was very unhappy, but she never

said why; and in particular, she told me frequently, as she had told me formerly, that she had been very unhappy at school, and often intended to kill herself. I asked her again and again the cause of her unhappiness, but she did not know it. It certainly appeared to be mere talk, and I found a festivity in it; it became jolly, as it were, to laugh at her suicidal schemes, and the solemnity with which she unfolded them: with this she was now and then a little offended. "Mamma is going to have some walnuts pickled next week," a little girl once said to me, a little boy; and she added, with a grave look and an air of quiet resolution, "and mamma says she is quite determined!" So poor Harriet was quite determined, and did not choose to be laughed out of it, being displeased with my apologue of the walnuts.

In this strange world one comes across strange people sometimes, and finds strange kinds of industry, especially when a man lays himself out for strange characters. Dining one day at a hotel in London with Bysshe and Harriet, I met a poor poet there, whose acquaintance they had just made,—how, I know not; I think, through some advertisement in a newspaper. Shelley introduced me to him, and grimly whispered, that he was going to kill himself. "Very well!" "Immediately!" he added. "With all my heart!" The professor of suicide, it must

be admitted, had rather a melancholy look. He was pale, cadaverous, and he discoursed during dinner in a grave, pedantic manner, of his inflexible resolution to commit suicide, as it seemed, instantly; and he talked much, and with due solemnity, of Otho,—of the Otho of Tacitus,—until dinner was over. Otho, he said, was his favourite—his hero! However, Otho ate his salmon and lobster sauce, and whatever else was put before him, largely and voraciously, and with a prodigious relish; took his wine very freely, and then a long nap; and finally departed, without having become a felon of himself. When he had taken his leave, Harriet told me with great glee,—"The gentleman is going to kill himself." "Really!" "Directly; is not that quite delightful?" "Quite!" "I should not wonder if he is doing it now!" I did not wish to put her out of conceit with this notion, but I should have wondered much if he had been doing anything of the kind. I saw him twice or thrice, there and thereabouts; his talk was ever in the same self-murderous vein; so confidently did he speak, so urgent was the necessity, that on leaving the room for five minutes one might expect to return and find him in a pool of blood; but no, the calamity never happened; it was plain that suicide was only his stock-in-trade. All people laughed at him, except Harriet, whose sympathies were excited at first; but after a short time, even

she got tired of him; or possibly she was jealous of Otho's superior confidence of assertion touching impending self-destruction. What ultimately became of the fellow I know not; I never heard that he cut his throat; perhaps he hit upon some other mode of getting a dinner, when this dodge was seen through.

Poor Shelley was too often taken possession of, and kept in a sort of imprisonment, or duress, in the society of persons in every respect unworthy of him, for their own sordid and selfish purposes; the plunderers taking care, meanwhile, that the captive and victim should see as little of his old friends as possible. One of the many inconveniences of being distinguished is, that every impudent pretender thinks he has a right to introduce and push himself, as an admirer of talent and genius, being at once a devoted worshipper, and a person admirably fitted to be kicked out of the room. Bysshe was cruelly pestered by impertinent intruders, and he felt the annoyance very sensibly; he used sometimes to turn them over to me; this was not pleasant for either party. But, however coolly such fellows might be treated, they would seldom go away the sooner; nothing, in short, but the free and liberal use of a pitchfork, or flail, would have delivered us from the unwelcome company.

If the line of life which the young poet had taken

subjected him to many disagreeable intrusions, and brought him frequently in contact with odious and pernicious people, on the other hand, it was the means of introducing him to some pleasant and clever persons, from whose society he derived much delight, and no small profit. Such intercourse exercised a powerful influence on his character and conduct. I will select a few instances, treating the subject somewhat discursively, as a miscellaneous matter. He spoke with enthusiasm of a charming family, whose acquaintance he had lately made, in what manner I do not remember, and he promised to introduce me to them, declaring that I should be as much taken with them as he was himself. He informed me soon afterwards that he had spoken of me to them, that they desired to see me, and the next day he would take me to dine with them. The next day—it was a Sunday, in the summer—we took a walk together, wandering about, as usual, for a long time without plan or purpose. About five o'clock Bysshe stopt suddenly at the door of a house in a fashionable street, ascended the steps hastily, and delivered one of his superb bravura knocks.

"What are we going to do here?"

"It is here we dine."

He placed me before him, that I might enter first, as the stranger; the door was thrown wide open,

and a strange spectacle presented itself. There were five naked figures in the passage advancing rapidly to meet us. The first was a boy of twelve years, the last a little girl of five; the other three children, the two eldest of them being girls, were of intermediate ages, between the two extremes. As soon as they saw me, they uttered a piercing cry, turned round, and ran wildly up stairs, screaming aloud. The stairs presented the appearance of Jacob's Ladder, with the angels ascending it, except that they had no wings, and they moved faster, and made more noise than the ordinary representations of the Patriarch's vision indicate. From the window of the nursery at the top of the house the children had seen the beloved Shelley,—had scampered down stairs in single file to welcome him; me, the killjoy, they had not observed.

I was presented to a truly elegant family, and I found everything in the best taste, and was highly gratified with my reception, and with the estimable acquisition to the number of my friends. Nothing was said about the first strange salutation, nor did I venture to inquire, what it signified. After dinner, Bysshe asked, why the children did not come into the room to the dessert, as usual. The lady of the house coloured slightly, and said Shelley should see them bye-and-bye, in the nursery, but they did not dare to show themselves in the dining-room.

They were all too much ashamed at having been seen, as they were, so unexpectedly, by a stranger!

Nothing more transpired to clear up the mystery of their nudity. At subsequent visits, the whole system was unfolded.

I am quite unable to do justice to the theory of philosophical nakedness. I can only recall a very few things of many which I heard on that head. There was to be soon a return to nature, it was believed,—to the natural and pristine state of innocence, in which we are taught, by the highest authority, that human beings were naked.

In order to prepare mankind for the happy impending restoration of perfect and universal nudity, children ought to be accustomed at an early age to be, at least occasionally, naked. It was alleged, moreover, that the practice of stripping young persons sometimes is eminently conducive to their health, to strength of body, symmetry, beauty, and to morality, and virtue; and that even grown persons may derive much benefit from remaining some hours, in mild weather, without their clothes. It was most manifest that the children liked to nakedize—such was the term of art—exceedingly; but it was something new and different from the ordinary routine of jackets, trowsers, and petticoats;—in a word, it was a change. It was conceded as a privilege and favour, and whilst they remained naked they were allowed—

a glorious concession to a child, to make as much noise as they pleased. These young innocents were remarkably healthy, happy, beautiful and intelligent; whether they would have been less so if they had always worn their clothes like other children, it is not easy to determine. As far as we can learn, nations who are habitually naked are not more healthy, happy, handsome and virtuous, than people who are constantly clothed from head to foot. The mistress of the family assured us that she frequently remained for hours without her clothes, and derived much advantage from the complete exposure to the air. She never seemed to have much the matter with her; and in imaginative persons fancy sways their feelings and convictions. "I rose early this morning, and having locked myself into my dressing-room, or undressing-room, I remained for three hours, stark-naked. I am all the better for it, I assure you; I always am. I feel so innocent during the rest of the day!" Impertinent persons would sometimes laugh at her frank avowal of superior innocence. Never was there a more modest, a more virtuous lady; never was there less cause for malicious laughter; and her feelings are perhaps intelligible enough. Any one who begins the day by remaining stark-naked for three or four hours in the early morning, closely shut up, and of necessity alone, is compelled, in order to pass the time, to be

steadily employed during the entire period of seclusion, in reading, writing, drawing, working,—to persevere in the performance of some engrossing duty. A day commenced in so useful and creditable a manner cannot fail to bring with it impressions of self-satisfaction and innocence. I gained some credit by communicating that I had sometimes nakedized, under the authority and by the advice of the celebrated Dr. Franklin, who wrote with earnestness in commendation of air-baths, for so he called and esteemed the remaining naked for some hours in the early morning. He discourses at length about the salubrious influence of the air on the bare skin; of this I do not pretend to judge. When I was young, I was surprisingly strong and healthy; air-bathing unquestionably never did me any harm, nor, so far as I could discover, any good; but I was so well, that it must have been a wonderful air and a wonderful bath indeed that could have made me better than I then was. This practice, like all other practices, had its peculiar conveniences and inconveniences. To carry it into effect, it is necessary to rise betimes, for in the first morning alone a person is seldom wanted, and the bath is not liable to be interrupted,—a most salutary condition. The air-bather, so long as he remains in the bath, is constrained to employ himself, to sit reading, or writing, with closed doors. To quit my occupation without

quitting the bath was impossible. On the other hand, it prevented a healthy morning walk; it cut one off from intercourse with others; and it did not allow me to go forth on the spur of the occasion, and the suggestion of the moment, to do something that might be useful or expedient. Moreover, there is some danger of going out unawares, unconscious of nakedness, for by familiarity with the state of nature, and wrapt up in abstract study, one soon learns to forget the helpless and shameful condition. It is a prudent precaution, therefore, not only to lock the door, but also to put the key away in some place that may remind us, through artificial memory, and the association of ideas, in seeking it, that our first parents were too fond of apples and of knowledge. The father of air-bathing, it is said, was once guilty of inadvertence in this respect. The Doctor tells us that he pursued his morning studies in utter nakedness, with the most beneficial results, for many summers, but he does not tell us the anecdote which I will relate. The philosopher was never in affluence, and having once received a bill of exchange from England for a moderate amount from a debtor of doubtful character, he had sent it to the neighbouring town to be presented for acceptance, and he was most anxious to learn whether his English correspondent's paper had been duly honoured. A friend going to the town undertook to inquire, and

to let him know. He came home too late to communicate with the doctor that night; but early the next morning Benjamin espied his friend's maid-servant tripping quickly across the Green towards his house with a letter in her hand. The long habit of remaining for hours without his clothes, and his extreme solicitude as to the fate of the bill, overpowered his consciousness. When the girl came within a few yards of his door, the venerable patriot eagerly rushed out, a second, or a third Adam, to meet her. She fled in terror, and ran screaming home.

"What is the matter? Did you see the Doctor?"

"Oh! No! Poor old gentleman; we shall never see him again; he has been barbarously murdered, no doubt! The Indians got possession of the farther end of the village in the night; the chief is in the poor Doctor's house, and as soon as he saw me he ran out, tomahawk in hand, to scalp me!"

To counteract absence of mind, and to obviate such unpleasant contingencies, it is prudent, as I soon discovered myself, and have already observed, not only to lock the door, but to adopt additional precautions. Females, it is notorious, have more presence of mind than we have; therefore the charming, enthusiastic lady, who sat for three hours

at a time, at the dawn of day, cooling her unprejudiced mutton, might not be subject to the like precipitancy, and to incur the like peril. To rush naked into the street, that she might welcome a long absent friend, would be an unpleasant mistake before the Return to Nature and innocence had been duly proclaimed at Temple Bar by naked heralds: even the day before. Except on my first visit, the dear children never appeared naked before me; before Bysshe they often did. It is for his credit's sake that I state it. I was of the earth, earthy; he was of the heaven, heavenly;—I was a worldling; he had already returned to nature, or rather he had never quitted her. He was a pure spirit, in the Divine likeness of the Archangel Gabriel; the peace-breathing, lily-bearing, Annunciator. Whether the charming lady might not, without tarnish or discredit, have appeared before him robed only in her innocency, as she was wont to sit during the early morning hours, I will not presume to determine; it is, at all events, certain that she never did so.

Much has been said and written by wise men and by foolish ones on the subject of going naked; it would not be to the purpose to repeat their arguments and conclusions, still less expedient would it be to discuss the matter anew; but looking at the question without regard to moral, physical, or intel-

lectual amelioration, but simply with a view to personal comfort, I will merely remark that the practice would not be convenient or agreeable. Shelley was powerfully attracted by every scheme tending towards improvement, to ethical progress, and human perfectibility; and the attraction was more powerful in proportion as the scheme was novel, strange, and startling; but he was not tempted to accept—and it is extraordinary that he was not—the project of virtuous and philanthropic nudity. It is fortunate, indeed, that he did not put it in practice in his own person, his absence and aberration of mind being totally over-powering,—

> "and being transported
> And rapt in secret studies,"

he would probably have started off heedlessly some fine morning, and run through the streets of London, to a diplomatic conference with his father's bootless negotiators, or other appointment, the recollection of which had suddenly flashed across the mind of the naked student; as the priests of old ran about Rome bare on the Lupercalia. Or peradventure the handsome young gymnosophist, being startled at his books by the sound of the meal-going bell, would have joined a party of female friends at the breakfast table, as wanting in all clothing,

and as unconscious of the want as a new-born babe.

> "He thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated
> To closeness, and the bettering of his mind,

was eminently unqualified to engage in so slippery and perilous an innovation.

There have always been, off and on, a considerable number of people doing the stays movement. This part of female apparel had many enemies at that period; stays, it may be easily believed, found no favour with the advocates of nakedness. I heard much from them of the sin and danger of wearing stays, and I listened patiently to many a fierce, angry diatribe against them. I was once taken to a lecture on stays, to be delivered by a first-rate, scientific Blue. She inhabited a large and handsome old house in a dull street, and an old-fashioned, obsolete part of the town. Scene the first was the dining-room; it had been fitted up as a lecture-room. The audience was pretty numerous, and, with the sole exception of myself, consisted exclusively of females. I asked my fair conductress, by whose side I was seated, if it was quite proper for me to remain? She commanded me to stay. "You are a friend of our sex, and perfectly free from prejudices!" The latter part of the compliment I sensibly felt that I did not deserve. On

a large table was a green cloth, and on the cloth were plaster-casts, drawings and engravings, and a rabbit with its chest cut open, so that the lungs appeared. The lady lecturess came forward, and after a profound courtesy and gentle murmurs of applause, she began to discourse fluently, earnestly, and rather agreeably; with extreme solemnity,—with the gravity, indeed, of many professors. She addressed herself first to the casts, and, laying her hands upon them, expounded at length what may be called the upper works of woman. She then directed our attention to the deceased rabbit, pointing to different portions of the lungs, and explaining, or attempting to explain, the whole economy of respiration. She proved likewise, exceedingly well, that stays on the body of a rabbit would interfere with and impede its movements, and would be inconvenient and uncomfortable. Bundles of stays of different kinds were handed to her; these she successively applied to the plaster-casts, and demonstrated how grievously they offended against every principle of anatomical science; launching forth into an animated invective against busks, which, whether they were of wood, of whalebone, or of steel, found no quarter. She then exhibited pictures of crooked shoulders, distorted spines, contracted chests, and manifold deformities, painful to behold. She assured us, that all these calamities, and many

others, were occasioned solely by the pernicious pressure of stays. The peroration was exceedingly impressive and authoritative; she assured us, as if from revelation, that a benevolent Providence never intended the fairest of his creatures to be so strait-laced,—to commit their captivating persons to devilish engines of torture and destruction.

The second scene was the drawing-room. The many had departed; a select party, the chosen few, had been invited to remain and take coffee. When I entered the room, I was placed, for cause of honour, upon the sofa, after the foreign fashion; the lady of the house had resided much abroad, and presently she set herself down by my side. She said much in courteous phrase of the honour and pleasure, and so on, of my attendance.

"You heard my poor discourse, sir; through your kindness, you heard it with attention. What do you really believe were the designs of Providence with respect to us females; do you think that we were ever intended to wear stays? Have I not fully demonstrated that we were not?"

"To say the truth, madam, I do not very well know how to answer you: with respect to women, I am not competent to decide; but I am fully convinced, and you demonstrated it completely, that Providence never meant that a buck rabbit should wear stays!"

"And indeed it was a buck; what a terrible oversight! "That is much to be regretted, on all accounts; it ought most unquestionably to have been a doe; it is a thousand pities!"

A long silence ensued; the poor lady was manifestly troubled about the sex of her anatomical subject.

When she had recovered herself, and conversation was resumed, it came out that Bysshe had promised faithfully to attend the lecture, but the traitor had faithlessly broken his engagement. His defection was deeply deplored. The lecturess spoke of him with animation and enthusiasm; if he would once declare himself distinctly on the great, the momentous question, the distinct declaration of so great and influential a mind would instantly and finally determine it. Not another pair of stays would ever be sold, made, or worn in Europe!

Coffee was served; I partook of it, it was excellent; and when the guests had all been supplied, the philosopheress took a cup herself. A china cup containing a yellow powder was brought to her; she took a teaspoonful of the powder, and stirred it into her coffee.

"Was it ginger, saffron, gold dust, the dust of the potable gold of the alchymists,—what was it?" I ventured to inquire.

"No; it was flour of mustard. I once had the

honour and happiness to see the Great Frederick of Prussia take coffee at Pottsdam, and he put flour of mustard into his coffee, as I have just done; and therefore I have taken it thus ever since, in memory of so illustrious a man. He was once in a campaign in Poland, in a rainy season, and a marshy country, when he was attacked grievously, dangerously, by diarrhœa; his ordinary medical attendants could not relieve him. 'Was there no physician in the neighbourhood?' 'Yes, a celebrated one, but he is a Jew, and your Majesty would not like to consult him.' 'Jew or Gentile, so that he can cure me, bring him here!' The Polish physician prescribed flour of mustard in coffee; the King took it immediately and freely, and the effect was rapid and beneficial. The Great Frederick was subject to such attacks, and therefore he persevered in using the remedy."

"And are you subject to them?"

Her temperament appeared to be dry and adust.

"No! By no means! But it is only a due tribute of respect for the memory of so great a man, that I should always take my coffee as I once saw him take his!"

The whole soul of my ardent and imaginative young friend was inflamed at this period of his life, by a glowing desire to witness and to promote the improvement and progress of civil society. He

had translated an essay, or treatise, of some French philosopher, on the Perfectibility of the Human Species; and he read his translation aloud to me, as well as the writings of other authors on the same fanciful subject. A state of things was fast approaching, we were assured, in which mankind, having become perfectly virtuous, the sanction of laws, as well as all binding contracts and agreements, would no longer be required. It would be fortunate and happy, indeed, if the accession of this complete change and entire amelioration were true, or even probable. A man might then lend ten or fifty thousand pounds to a friend, or even to any stranger, at four per cent., or on any other terms, without the trouble and delay of executing mortgages, or bonds, or other securities; without the wearisome investigation of intricate titles; without the dull, tedious, and expensive formalities of lawyers. And so it would be with all other transactions whatever, no other safeguard than that of triumphant and universally prevailing virtue ought ever to be looked for. Marriage, of course, would be on the same easy, but secure, footing as all other agreements. So far as it is a civil contract, this might very well be, if all men and all women were perfectly true, honourable, and virtuous. Nobody affected to believe that such a condition of affairs actually existed; but that it would soon arrive, some well-meaning persons

confidently asserted, and seemed to credit it. I met with certain of the advocates of the coming perfectibility, worthy, but somewhat credulous people: the men discoursed of its influence over all human affairs, the women treated it principally with reference to those matters which most nearly concern themselves. I listened to observations and conversations which to me, doubting of the blessed advent, were laughable.

One example will suffice: I went to drink coffee and tea, to listen to conversation more or less instructive, and to music, and to enjoy all such innocent recreations as are not inconsistent with perfectibility, at the handsome house of a very hospitable and agreeable perfectible. In the course of the evening a lady stole into the room, and took her seat on a solitary sofa opposite; she was a most lovely creature, in every respect, and I expressed my admiration of her in no measured terms to the lady of the house, with whom I was conversing, as I had supposed, in confidence, and under the belief that what I had said was to go no farther. After a little while, the lady of the house crossed the room, sat down by the side of her lovely guest, and conversed earnestly with her, both the ladies occasionally looking at me. Afterwards, a signal was made that I was to approach; I obeyed it. The lady of the house then told the fair stranger, word for word, all that I had said about her, pausing from

time to time, and asking me if I had not said so. It was impossible to deny it. "Well, sir," said the stranger lady, with a certain gracious gravity, when she had heard all my praises, and I had confirmed them, "your homage is accepted, and when the perfectibility of the human race is accomplished, you shall be made happy." "Thank you, Madam," I answered, somewhat impertinently, I fear; "and when the Millennium commences, we will go and reside in the New Jerusalem; we will hire a handsome first-floor in a commodious house, hollowed out of one huge emerald, and live together in it!" She frowned at this harmless jest, but made no reply. I did not think that so rare a beauty could have looked so black, and withdrew in manifest anger.

A few days after our conversation, she related what I had said to Bysshe, adding, "Your friend is a very strange person indeed; it is quite plain that he does not believe in the perfectibility of the human race. How unaccountable! and indeed he seems to make it the sole business of his life to scoff at everything!"

"How could you think of living with her in a house carved out of an emerald?" He inquired with his saddest look and in his most plaintive voice, when he told me this.

I answered, "We read in the Book of Revelation that each of the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem

was a pearl, and one foundation of the walls was a topaz, another an amethyst, and so on; and consequently it did not seem too much to expect that when the number of the elect has been accomplished, and what she promised me is to take place, I might easily hire such apocalyptic apartments for us to live in together, as I proposed to her."

He looked grave, and said mournfully, "You laugh at everything! I am convinced that there can be no entire regeneration of mankind until laughter is put down!"

On that point at least we were agreed.

The poetic temperament is naturally melancholy, the poet's airy realms being thickly peopled by imaginary sorrows; and Shelley's natural melancholy had been confirmed and increased by manifold crosses, vexations, and disappointments; yet occasionally he could be merry, notwithstanding the strong aversion for laughter and ridicule which he habitually and vehemently expressed. He could indulge in a mirthful sally; he could play joyous, funny pranks, and could relate or even act them over again, in a vivacious manner, and with a keen relish and agreeable recollections of his own mischievous raillery. His frolics were ever peculiar and characteristic; their nature will be best explained and illustrated by an example:

One summer's evening he had to travel a short

distance in his own country, in the county of Sussex;—such, if I mistake not, for I know the adventure only from Bysshe's account of it, was the scene of his whimsical exploit. He set out on foot, expecting that the stage would soon overtake him. He had not proceeded far when the heavy coach came up. There was no room outside, but the six inside seats were unoccupied; he got in, and the vehicle rumbled along the dusty road. For a little while it was all very well, but the heavy stage coach stopped suddenly, and a heavy old woman came in to him, reddened with heat, steaming and running down with perspiration. She took her place in the middle seat, like a huge ass between a pair of enormous panniers; for, on one side was a mighty basket, crammed full of mellow apples, and on the other a like basket, equally well filled with large onions. The odour of the apples and the onions, and the aspect of the heated, melting, smoking old woman, were intolerable to the delicate, sensitive young poet. He bore it, at first, patiently, then impatiently, at last he could endure it no longer; so, starting up, he seated himself on the floor of the coach, and, fixing his tearful, woeful eyes upon her, he addressed his companion thus, in thrilling accents:

> "For heaven's sake, let us sit upon the ground,
> And tell sad stories of the death of kings!

> How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
> Some haunted by the ghosts they dispossessed;
> Some poisoned by their wives; some sleeping killed,
> All murthered!"

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed the terrified old woman. "Dear! dear! Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!"

But when he shrieked out the two last words, "All murthered!" she ran to the window in an agony, and, thrusting out her head, cried:

"Oh, guard, guard! stop! Oh, guard, guard, guard! let me out!"

The door was opened, she alighted immediately with her strong-smelling wares, and through the united wit of two great poets, that of Shakspeare and his own, he was permitted to finish his journey alone.

He was proud of this achievement, and delighted in it long afterwards.

"Show us, Bysshe, how you got rid of the old woman in Sussex."

He sprang wildly on his feet, and, taking his seat on the floor, with a melancholy air, and in a piteous voice, cried out:

> "For heaven's sake, let us sit upon the ground!"

When he had given out the words, "All murthered!" with a fiendish yell, he started up, threw open the

window, and began to call, "Guard! guard!" often, to the astonishment of persons passing by, whose temperament was less poetic, and less excitable than his own.

So moving were the woes of the gentle Richard Plantagenet, told by the great dramatist, and declaimed by another poet, second to him, at least in time! So drastic was their effect!

Quitting the Swan of Avon, and the Swan of the Arun, and of Warnham mere, we will return for a moment to the lovely and indignant lady.

Some months after the huge emerald had proved to be a stone of offence and a stumbling-block in the way to her good graces, I met her alone in Orchard Street; she was exceedingly handsome by daylight, but less handsome than she had appeared by candlelight; the tell-tale summer's sun showed brown or yellow hues. It struck me that the emerald mansion would not be becoming to her complexion; it would be preferable to reside in a ruby, or a topaz. She received me graciously, shaking hands cordially; and we walked round Portman Square together. To say the truth, I met her again soon after my first disaster, and, as a Christian, I desired to live and to die in peace with her. Accordingly, when she was quite alone, I ventured to creep up to her, and, sitting down softly by her side, humbly to address her. I said nothing

of her transcendent beauty, which had been the cause of my original discomfiture, and had brought down upon my head the odious and opprobrious appellation of a scoffer; nor of the progress of mankind towards perfection, of which I doubted; but I spoke of indifferent subjects only; of chess, of cards, of quadrille. At first, certainly, she was somewhat crusty, treating me as an Infidel ought always to be treated, but she softened by degrees.

"Well! Have you made it up?" the lady of the house asked, as she walked past us, and saw us conversing together in a friendly manner.

"We never had anything to make up," answered the lovely lady, obligingly; "we never had any quarrel!"

She spoke much of Shelley, and in such terms that, had we been old and bitter enemies, we should have been at once reconciled. She spoke also of him whilst we were walking round the square, and with so great warmth, admiration, and enthusiasm, that the yellow tints on her skin rapidly and completely disappeared, and I thought she would look perfectly charming even in the emerald messuage.

"I was talking about him with a female friend the other day, that he is so modest, so reserved, so pure, so virtuous,

'A clear, immaculate, and silver fountain

and we were saying what terrible havoc he would make, if he were at all rakish!"

"If he were less modest, he would be less attractive, and therefore less dangerous."

"Yes, it would be so. But that did not occur to us."

"I wonder it did not, for it is sufficiently obvious."

"Have you seen him lately?"

"Have you?"

There were many mutual inquiries.

"Does he not visit you then?"

"I wish he did; I would gladly, oh, so gladly, give half of all I possess, if he were an habitual, I will add even an occasional visitor! Cannot you bring him to me? Will you?"

"I will try."

"You said you wish to learn quadrille; we will teach you. My mother, my sister, and myself have lived much in Spain, where alone they understand the game: quadrille is well played there. If you can excuse our not playing for money, which we never do, we will play with you whenever you choose."

"To learn so difficult a game as quadrille demands much leisure, and I have none."

"That is a pity, for it is well worth learning! However, you will come and see me?"

"It must be after my return to London, because

I am going into the country to-morrow, for some months."

"Whenever you please; but bring him with you."

In one respect only is the long vacation too long; on every other account I have invariably found it too short. The absence from London is so long, that it causes a disruption of studies, pursuits, and acquaintances; of acquaintances that might have ripened into valuable friendships.

When I returned to town in November, the recollection of my obliging instructress in quadrille had faded, and Bysshe and myself were so ungrateful as to forget the lovely perfectible! The precise nature of the perfect felicity which was promised to the elect, and was to be enjoyed by them, when the perfectibility of the human species was accomplished, I never discovered. It certainly was not that kind of felicity that one would at first infer from the lax, ambiguous manner of talking in use among zealous votaries. It was something etherial, spiritualised, transcendent, remote from the gratifications of the senses, and the grossness of mortal frailty,—a certain celestial joy. In truth, my curiosity did not stimulate me to inquire minutely into the conditions of a state of society, in which I did not myself believe.

During his residence of some weeks or months in Half-Moon-Street, Bysshe was happy and comfortable,—comfortable according to his own peculiar

scheme of life. There were few shelves for books in the little sitting-room on the first-floor; but books accumulated rapidly, and they were arranged in rows on the floor, in the recesses on each side of the fireplace; and they were piled in disorder on tables and chairs, and heaped up under tables in confusion. Many books had been left behind, through a miserable negligence and inconceivable rapidity of movement and evolutions, in localities from whence they never emerged, and were never seen or heard of more. If he possessed the faculty of losing volumes without number, he had the power also to assemble around him again, in a few days, a respectable library. In one recess remained, but little disturbed by any of us, in a long row, a Latin edition, or translation, of the works of Emmanuel Kant. It was comprised in I know not how many volumes; they were in boards, and were uncut, and unopened. Of these, the young metaphysician had been most anxious to obtain possession, but he totally neglected them obtained. I do not believe that he ever read a single page of the transcendental philosopher. I took up a volume myself occasionally, and attempted to get through a few pages, but I did not make any progress. I found in the mystical dogmatism nothing attractive in any respect, but, on the contrary, much to repel me. The only remark which I recollect to have made was that the word "purus"

occurred many times in every page, and in every case, gender, and number.

The Kantian philosophy was much in vogue at that time, but I never found an adept, who was able to explain to me the meaning of that which of myself, and without the advantage and assistance of oral instruction, it was totally impossible to comprehend. Harriet's powers of reading aloud were in full force, and were often brought into requisition. "Rokeby" had lately appeared, a poor performance, at which the critics laughed unmercifully; but the fair reader was pleased with it, and read it aloud more than once throughout.

There were a few pleasing passages, pretty descriptions, and good lines interspersed, here and there, with much fluent common-place verse and book-making. I listened with attention, but I could never make out the story, either of that poem, or of the other poems of the same fertile author, which I heard from the same lips. Scene after scene passes over the mind, like a dream, and no permanent or distinct impression is left behind by the flitting shadows.

Finding myself in the neighbourhood of Rokeby some years afterwards, I remembered enough of what I had heard to be induced to visit the spot. It repaid a ride, and was well worth the deviation from my direct course. The confluence of the Greta and

the Tees is pleasing, perhaps even striking. Bysshe was sometimes able to give his attention for a little while to the reading, which flowed on easily in a continuous, unbroken stream, like the versification of the Poet of the Scottish Border; he then suddenly started off, and returned, and heard a little more; the uninspired and uninspiring strains still trickling down, like the waters of the Greta in their rocky bed. It may seem, that the many fits and many bouts of linked readings, long drawn out, must have been wearisome, but they were not so; the good Harriet read well, clearly, distinctly, in an agreeable voice, and with a just accent and emphasis; but the principal charm of these performances was, that they were so delightful to the performer, she enjoyed herself so much in the healthy exercise of the chest, that it would have been churlish indeed not to have lent a patient ear.

"Come, sit down, be quite still; do not walk about the room, as Bysshe does; be silent, and attend to me; do not ask any foolish questions! When I come to anything, that I think you cannot understand, I will explain it to you myself!"

Not to humour her would have been inhuman, it would have been impossible. Shelley was visited occasionally by a few agreeable, and by some tolerably agreeable acquaintances, chiefly of a literary description; whom to write at length would be tedious.

As the author of another equally uninspired, but more popular, more extensively and permanently popular poem, than "Rokeby," "Propriaquæ maribus," truly sings concerning nouns of anomalous and irregular genders. One of these visitors may be named, the Chevalier Lawrence, a Knight of Malta, who had lately reached some celebrity by his novel, "The Empire of the Nairs." He had resided long in the Court of some small German potentate, and related anecdotes that were amusing enough of the courts and literature of Germany. He spoke much of nobility, to which in his capacity of a Knight of Malta, he had devoted himself; and of some work, which he had written concerning the nobles of England, proving that the real English nobles are not the peers of the realm, as is universally, but erroneously, believed, but the old families of landed gentry; and this, taking nobility in a continental sense, and according to continental notions, is strictly true.

I never fell in with the discourse of nobility,—I do not know even its proper title: with his great work, upon which his immortality rests, "The Empire of the Nairs," I could not get on, although I tried to read it more than once; it was too roseate, too much like the amatory honey-dew of Tommy Moore. To my young friends the Indian tale was attractive; they read it; and even Eliza,

who never read anything else, read it, and declared, in an audible voice, that it was quite delightful. Gracious Heaven! What would Miss Warne say?

I saw a great deal of Bysshe during his residence in the quiet, convenient street, which unquestionably, however paradoxical it may seem, suited him better than the mountains of Wales or Cumberland.

"If the man in the moon be a queer fellow, what are we to make of the man in the Half-Moon?"

"The man in the moon!" he said, in a piteous voice; "the man in the moon!" And having looked on the moon imploringly for some time, he asked: "Do you really believe there is a man in the moon? More than one?" He then sighed deeply, exclaiming, "Poor fellow!"

I sat with him, read with him, walked with him, talked with him; and that there might be no limit to my self-devotion, I dined with him.

As we travel now-a-days through London in a cab, a vehicle unknown in the days of which I write, through devious ways and unheard-of streets, known only to cabmen and their associates, the fairies; in like manner did I walk with Bysshe then. I always let him lead the way, and followed his guidance: his course and choice of direction were erratic and uncommon, and he would dart across the road and quickly enter some unpromising, ill-omened street or passage, and hurry

me along it: I have often wondered by what impulse he was thus borne along. His flight was to escape from, not to pursue; to get away from some object for which he had conceived a sudden dislike.

To return to dinner. At the bare proposal to order dinner, poor Shelley stood aghast, in speechless trance; when he had somewhat recovered from the outrage to his feelings, "Ask Harriet," he shrilly cried, with a desponding, supplicating mien. The good Harriet herself was no proficient in culinary arts; she had never been initiated in the mysteries of housewifery: "Whatever you please," was her ordinary answer.

I was once staying at the house of a country clergyman; the worthy pastor was eminently skilled in divine things; his not less worthy wife was deeply conversant with human affairs, well versed in all the learning of the kitchen, excellent in ordering the genial board, as became the helpmate of a first-rate theologian. There were usually a few neighbours, guests at dinner. Amongst these, one day, was a lovely young woman; healthy, comely, fair, and plump; the daughter of a substantial farmer of a superior degree.

When the visitors had departed, my kind and notable hostess asked me in confidence what I thought of the handsome, well-fleshed girl?

"I think that she is a beautiful creature! I have seldom seen a prettier young woman of the kind!"

"She is, indeed, and she is as good as she is beautiful—so useful in a house."

"I had heard much about her, but I never saw her before; and I am satisfied that all I heard about her is true. I have had a great deal of talk with her; she seems to understand everything, and to be wonderfully clever in a family. I could not take my eyes off her all the evening; I am afraid she would think me rude, but I could not help it!" "She is so beautiful, it is very difficult to help looking at her; it is not easy to take one's eyes off her!" "No! It is not indeed! I sat looking at her, and thinking what delightful jellies she would make; I could not help looking at her, and saying to myself, how I should like to taste her calves'-foot jelly. And I longed to tell her so!"

Poor Harriet had pledged herself at Keswick to learn of Mrs. Southey to make tea cakes; but Mrs. Southey would not teach, or Harriet would not learn, and she had not redeemed her pledge. It was her only chance, and she lost it, which was unfortunate: it would have been a green spot in a desert. To say, "Whatever you please," is a sorry mode of ordering dinner, and it was all she ever said on that head. Some considerable time after the appointed hour, a roasted shoulder of mutton, of

the coarsest, toughest grain, graced, or disgraced, the ill-supplied table; the watery gravy that issued from the perverse joint, when it was cut, a duty commonly assigned to me, seemed the most apt of all things to embody the conception of penury and utter destitution. There were potatoes in every respect worthy of the mutton; and the cheese, which was either forgotten or uneatable, closed the ungenial repast. Sometimes there was a huge boiled leg of mutton, boiled till the bone was ready to drop out of the meat, which shrank and started from it on all sides, without any sauce, but with turnips raw, and manifestly unworthy to be boiled any longer. Sometimes there were impregnable beef-steaks—soles for shooting-shoes. I have dropped a word, a hint, about a pudding; a pudding, Bysshe said dogmatically, is a prejudice. I have wished that the converse of the proposition were true, and that a prejudice was a pudding, and then, according to the judgment of my more enlightened young friends, I should never have been without one.

It is a strong proof of the extraordinary fascination of the society of the Divine Poet, that to purchase it—and it was absolutely requisite to pay a price—I submitted cheerfully so often, and for such a long period, to so many inconveniences and privations. I was never indifferent to the amenities of life; I had always been accustomed to comfort,—to a

certain elegance, indeed: at college, in preparing for college, and more especially at home; for in a district where the creature comforts were well cared for, my own family were always conspicuous for an exact and exquisite nicety. In this respect, as in some others, there was something contradictory in Shelley: he emphatically—I may say ostentatiously—renounced whatever might be stigmatized by a morose philosopher of Spartan habits and principles as luxury; and yet, like the majority of mankind, he appeared to be best pleased when he was most at his ease. He continually and openly lamented his rude and tyrannical extrusion from Oxford; and it was manifest that he was unconsciously sensible of the loss of innumerable commodities; he secretly pined for he knew not what; in truth, he pined for the flesh-pots of Egypt; for the leeks, and the onions, and the water-melons. At that University, behold with reverence the rare wisdom of our forefathers! a man was compelled to live comfortably whether he would or not, and in spite of himself.

Bysshe's dietary was frugal and independent; very remarkable and quite peculiar to himself. When he felt hungry he would dash into the first baker's shop, buy a loaf and rush out again, bearing it under his arm; and he strode onwards in his rapid course, breaking off pieces of bread and

greedily swallowing them. But however frugal the fare, the waste was considerable, and his path might be tracked, like that of Hop-o'-my-Thumb through the wood, in Mother Goose her tale, by a long line of crumbs.

The spot, where he sat reading, or writing, and eating his dry bread, was likewise marked out by a circle of crumbs and fragments scattered on the floor He took with bread, frequently by way of condiment, not water-cresses, as did the Persians of old, according to the fable of Xenophon, but common pudding raisins. These he purchased at some mean little shop, that he might be the more speedily served; and he carried them loose in his waistcoat-pocket, and eat them with his dry bread. He occasionally rolled up little pellets of bread, and, in a sly, mysterious manner, shot them with his thumb, hitting the persons—whom he met in his walks—on the face, commonly on the nose, at which he grew to be very dexterous.

When he was dining at a coffee-house, he would sometimes amuse himself thus, if that could be an amusement, which was done unconsciously. A person receiving an unceremonious fillip on the nose, after this fashion, started and stared about; but I never found that anybody, although I was often apprehensive, that some one might resent it, perceived or suspected, from what quarter the

offending missile had come. The wounded party seemed to find satisfaction in gazing upwards at the ceiling, and in the belief that a piece of plaster had fallen from thence. When he was eating his bread alone over his book he would shoot his pellets about the room, taking aim at a picture, at an image, or at any other object which attracted his notice. He had been taught by a French lady to make panada; and with this food he often indulged himself. His simple cookery was performed thus. He broke a quantity—often, indeed, a surprising quantity—of bread into a large bason, and poured boiling water upon it. When the bread had been steeped awhile, and had swelled sufficiently, he poured off the water, squeezing it out of the bread, which he chopped up with a spoon; he then sprinkled pounded loaf sugar over it, and grated nutmeg upon it, and devoured the mass with a prodigious relish. He was standing one day in the middle of the room, bason in hand, feeding himself voraciously, gorging himself with pap.

"Why, Bysshe," I said, "you lap it up as greedily as the Valkyriæ in Scandinavian story lap up the blood of the slain!"

"Aye!" he shouted out, with grim delight, "I lap up the blood of the slain!"

The idea captivated him; he was continually repeating the words; and he often took panada, I

suspect, merely to indulge this wild fancy, and say, "I am going to lap up the blood of the slain! To sup up the gore of murdered kings!"

Having previously fed himself after his fashion from his private stores, he was independent of dinner, and quite indifferent to it; the slice of tough mutton would remain untouched upon his plate, and he would sit at table reading some book, often reading aloud, seemingly unconscious of the hospitable rites in which others were engaged, his bread bullets meanwhile being discharged in every direction.

The provisions supplied at lodgings in London were too frequently in those days detestable, and the service which was rendered abominable and disgusting. Meat was procured wherever meat might be bought most cheaply, in order that, being paid for dearly, a more enormous profit might be realised upon it; and those dishes were selected in which the ignorance in cookery of a servant-of-all-work might be least striking.

Our dinners, therefore, were constructive, a dumb show, a mere empty, idle ceremony; our only resource against absolute starvation was tea. "We will have some muffins and crumpets for tea," the famished Harriet would say. "They will butter them!" Bysshe exclaimed, in a voice thrilling with horror. Harriet sometimes ordered them privily, without consulting

him; and when they were brought in silently, and appeared smiling upon the tea-table, he dealt with them as remorselessly as with Mrs. Southey's tea-cakes at Keswick. We meekly sought relief in buttered toast; but the butter was too commonly bad, and ill-suited to our palates, but answering admirably the final cause of making the toast; that not being relished in the parlour, there might be more left for the unclean maid to eat. Penny buns were our assured resource. The survivors of those days of peril and hardship are indebted for their existence to the humane interposition and succour of penny buns. A shilling's worth of penny buns for tea. If the purchase was entrusted to the maid, she got such buns as none could believe to have been made on earth, proving thereby incontestably that the girl had some direct communication with the infernal regions, where alone they could have been procured. Shelley was fond of penny buns, but he never bought them unless he was put up to it.

"Get a shilling's worth of penny buns, Bysshe," Harriet said, "at some good confectioner's," the situation of whose shop she described.

He rushed out with incredible alacrity, like a Wind God, and in an instant returned, and was heard stumbling and tumbling up stairs, with the bag of buns, open at the top, in his hand; and he would sometimes, in his hot haste, drop them on the

stairs, and they all rolled down to the bottom, and he picked them up again; but we were not particular. We had our own tea; it usually lay spread out on an open paper upon a side table; others might help themselves, and probably they did so, but there was always some left for us.

Such was the Poetic Life! But, ah, sweet youth, how soon it fades! All these privations and miseries were then as nothing. They were the salt of life, and surely we associated with the salt of the earth. To say the truth, I love a good penny bun to this hour; I look upon one with gratitude, as a friend in need, with emotion, as my preserver! The faculty of inducing his friends, and particularly myself, to undergo losses, derangements, and annoyances many and various, for the sake of his instructive and fascinating company, was certainly remarkable enough, but it was trifling indeed,—a slight exercise of the authority of talents and genius, in comparison with another and most astonishing power over the minds and souls and conduct of others, which he now and then unintentionally, and as it were unconsciously, put forth.

The conversation of the Divine Poet was found to be especially attractive and enchanting by all females, particularly by the young and intellectual. He never was inclined to go to bed; it may be truly affirmed that he never went to bed; he was sent to

bed, taken to bed, put to bed, but he never retired to rest of his own accord and voluntarily. He was commonly most communicative, unreserved, and eloquent and enthusiastic, when those around him were inclining to yield to the influence of sleep, or rather at the hour when they would have been disposed to seek their chambers but for the bewitching charms of his discourse. If he was in company with two or three young ladies at bed-time, they would continue to sit with him, hearing him and asking him questions. He took no note of time, and never thought of retiring himself, and the quiet hours of night glided away like moments; they remained,—female doctors disputing with him in the temple of wisdom and virtue, until some one of the fair audience, recollecting herself at last, exclaimed in a pause of the animated conversation:

"Well, but it is time to go to bed; surely it must be late!"

"Gracious goodness! It is five o'clock;—it is six o'clock in the morning!"

"It cannot be; it is impossible. There must be some mistake!"

"No; there is not. Hark! it is striking six! How incredible! How quickly the time has passed! It is wonderful! There is no use in going to bed now; we must remain as we are. We will have breakfast as soon as we can. I am hungry! It is

a fine, bright morning; let us take a turn in the garden; it will refresh us!"

And so the debate was adjourned, the conclave was broken up at the crowing of the cock, and the proceedings terminated with a walk and breakfast.

> "We, that are of purer fire,
> Imitate the starry quire,
> Who in their nightly watchful spheres
> Lead in sweet round the months and years."

It has happened that he had only one female disciple during the watches of the night, and the winged hours sped not less rapidly in interesting, engrossing debate. In two or three instances I have heard there was a noise about it, but most assuredly without other foundation than that such nocturnal consultations are unusual.

When the irresistible force of attraction was known, the old birds drove the young ones to their nests; the old hens sent the pullets to roost; and this was most readily effected by hunting the sorcerer to his chamber: the old bores despatched the young Adonis to bed, and then they might dispose of every widowed Venus as they would.

In the "Lives of the Saints," some acts, we are told, are set forth for example's sake, and that they may be universally imitated; others for edification only; others neither for example or edification, but solely as marvels to be wondered at, and in order to

demonstrate the infinite power of the supreme disposer of all things.

This strange social anomaly, of the occurrence of which the parties were totally unconscious at the time, is not adduced with the recommendation, "Go and do likewise," but to exemplify a wonderful charm, a potent spell, that, as far as I am able to discover, was never exercised by any other individual, however gifted. To me, observing the precise and sometimes painful punctuality with which ladies hasten to bed, this spiritual magnetism of my incomparable young friend has appeared the more astounding.

I have frequently wondered that the most inspiring conversation, the most interesting volume, the most ravishing music, the most critical situation at chess, has always proved less attractive than a bedroom candlestick, which, even in the best appointed houses, is commonly but a scurvy utensil. Nothing is ever engaging enough at the prescribed moment of departure to obtain even the brief respite of five minutes. We must except the stupid animal pastime of dancing, and this, when it once sets in, it is hardly possible to confine within moderate limits. What in the world did Bysshe say to his charmed and charming young watchwomen? I have often essayed—perhaps with a profane hand, and therefore in vain—to raise the veil that covered

the face of the mystical Isis; my attempts were uniformly abortive. I have frequently inquired of my friend: "What were you talking about all the long night, Bysshe, with your attendant fairies? Pray, what were you telling them?" He stared, and was perplexed; he did not, and could not, inform me. He had no concealments, since nothing remained for him to tell; the whole had passed away. Had he been then a mere conduit-pipe—a channel to convey pure streams from sources higher and nearer to heaven than even his own spotless mind? I have asked again and again the fair interlocutresses for some samples of the nightly dialogues, but I never obtained more than general expressions of vague delight. A tall, hard-featured middle-aged man, impatiently forcing his way through the crowd that commonly impedes the passage along Westminster Bridge, was once pointed out to me as the famous Walking Stewart,—as the man who had walked all over India and the far East, and every step of the way from the East Indies to London, save only the passage over some rivers and the little bit of sea, which separates Calais from Dover. I have often thought of this celebrated pedestrian in conjunction with my friend's nocturnal disquisitions. The connection is not obvious; but it may be shortly explained. William Godwin told me that he knew Stewart well, and

that he was worth knowing, because, without knowing him, nobody could possibly have any idea what a bore really was.

His chief delight was to walk at the rate of five miles an hour straight on end as long as it was light. In the evening he sought literary and scientific conversation, and the commerce of wits. He had lodgings somewhere near Westminster Hall; and on a fixed day of the week he gave a conversation party; and for that purpose he hired a spacious room at one of the coffee-houses round Palace Yard. The room was large, but the attendance was small, in spite of all his efforts to collect visitors, and moreover the affair was but dull. He complained to William Godwin, "You and the other great Wits of the day seldom come to my evening parties, and I know why you do not come. It is because you are afraid that the good things which you say will be lost; but I assure you, you are mistaken. Not a single word will be thrown away; nothing will be lost. I have taken effectual precautions to prevent it. I have engaged twelve eminent short-hand writers; they are placed behind screens in different parts of the room, very judiciously posted. They take down whatever they hear, and report it to myself; nothing can escape them. So fear not; not a word will be lost; talk your best!"

These arrangements having been made generally

known, the attendance became thinner, the conversation tighter, and the short-hand writers' reports more meagre. "For if there be anything in the world," William Godwin concluded, "that can effectually seal up a man's lips, it is the assurance that every word a man utters in private conversation will be written down and recorded against him!"

I have often wished—vainly wished—that one at least of the twelve short-hand writers had been placed behind a screen during Bysshe's nightly colloquies, to catch and secure for ever on paper a philosophical apocalypse, of which the duration was unhappily so transient. What a delightful and precious appendix to an imperfect biography would the notes of the short-hand writers afford! Shelley was given to sit up all night, and he often practised it. I have sometimes sat up with him, reading, conversing, drinking tea, playing at chess. The achievement is much less serious than persons, who have not made the experiment, would suppose. The night soon passes away; its duration indeed is but short. Nobody thinks of going to bed before twelve, it would be too early; at twelve the night commences. Nobody would go to bed at five, it would be too late; at five it is light—it is time to go out and take a walk; at five the night ceases. Five hours practically comprehend the whole night, except during the depth of winter, a portion of the

year, which none would select for keeping watch. To take a part of the day with which people in general are more conversant: a man who has dined at four comes home at six from his evening saunter. He looks over the newspaper, has tea at seven, plays at chess, at cards; reads a light book, listens to music, or takes a part in it. How soon is it eleven o'clock; and so quietly and quickly passes away the night from twelve to five, being a like space of five hours.

It may be fit to remark here, that I have always designated the distinguished person of whom I have often spoken, and shall often have occasion to speak, as William Godwin. Shelley called him shortly, Godwin; but I was not sufficiently intimate with him to justify the use of so familiar a title. In speaking of him to his own original, peculiar friends and associates, I have at first said, "Mr. Godwin;" but I was instantly corrected—I may perhaps say snubbed—by the emendation, "William Godwin, you mean." It was much as if I had spoken of a Quaker to Quakers, and adopted, to their discomfiture, terms implying creature-worship. His primary destination and proper occupation was minister in some congregation of Protestant dissenters, of what denomination I know not, being myself totally ignorant on the subject of religious dissent; and he escaped service on juries, in parochial offices, and

the like burthens, by returning himself to the last as a dissenting minister. As there is no great danger of a revolt in this instance, the prejudices of caste may be respected, and the Brahmin may receive his proper appellation of William Godwin.

Shelley told me, when he was at Oxford, that shortly before he came to the university he had taken poison for love of a young lady who had refused his hand. He had swallowed a large dose of arsenic, but his stomach rejected it, and he threw it up, or the principal part of it; and he described various distressing symptoms as vividly as if he was really suffering from the effects of the corrosive and deleterious metal; but it was purely imaginary. He frequently discoursed poetically, pathetically, and with fervid melancholy fancies of suicide; but I do not believe that he ever contemplated seriously and practically the perpetration of the crime. It was not at all in accordance with his principles. He suffered occasionally from certain painful infirmities; but his stamina were sound, his constitution and general health good. He coughed at times violently, as many others cough, especially after some imprudent exposure; and his whole life, so far as regards the care and preservation of his health, was but one imprudence. He coughed violently, and sometimes felt a pain in his side and chest, and he called it spasms. He coughed,

and declared that he broke blood-vessels and spit blood. I have heard him cough, and seen him spit, but I never observed, although I watched him narrowly, that he voided any blood. He was encouraged in these chimeras, and in the most unfounded notion of being consumptive, by persons who thought that they had an interest in his bad health, and who trafficked and made a profit of their own pretended ailments.

There was a coarse, fat woman, who used to spunge upon him unmercifully under pretence of breaking blood-vessels. It was said, that her lungs were her stock in trade; that she got three hundred a-year by her broken blood-vessels, receiving, as it were, compensation to that amount at least from the credulously charitable.

"Poor Matilda," that was not quite the name, he said to me, one day, horror-stricken with trembling compassion, "poor Matilda has broken a blood-vessel, and is spitting blood!"

"Poor Matilda," I answered, "has broken the cheese-toaster, and is spitting toasted cheese!"

He thought me very inhuman, I am sure, but he laughed; in truth, the woman was only drunk all the time. He coloured and laughed, but relieved her, and she continued to spit blood and to spunge upon the poor fellow, and, in every sense of the word, to spoil him.

In a crowded stage-coach Shelley once happened to sit opposite an old woman with very thick legs, who, as he imagined, was afflicted with elephantiasis, an exceedingly rare and most terrible disease, in which the legs swell and become as thick as those of an elephant, together with many other distressing symptoms, as the thickening and cracking of the skin, and indeed a whole Iliad of woes, of which he had recently read a formidable description in some medical work, that had taken entire possession of his fanciful and impressible soul. The patient, quite unconscious of her misery, sat dozing quietly over against him. He also took it into his head that the disease is very infectious, and that he had caught it of his corpulent and drowsy fellow-traveller; he presently began to discover unequivocal symptoms of the fearful contagion in his own person. I never saw him so thoroughly unhappy as he was; whilst he continued under the influence of this strange and unaccountable impression. His female friends tried to laugh him out of his preposterous whim, bantered him and inquired, how he came to find out that his fair neighbour had such thick legs? He did not relish, or even understand, their jests, but sighed deeply. By the advice of his friends, he was prevailed upon to consult a skilful and experienced surgeon, and submitted to a minute and careful examination: the surgeon of course assured

him, that no signs or trace of elephantiasis could be discerned. He further informed him, that the disease is excessively rare, almost unknown, in this part of the world; that it is not infectious, and that a person really afflicted by it could not bear to travel in a crowded stage-coach. Bysshe shook his head, sighed still more deeply, and was more thoroughly convinced than ever, that he was the victim of a cruel and incurable disease; and that these assurances were only given with the humane design of soothing one doomed to a miserable and inevitable death. His imagination was so much disturbed, that he was perpetually examining his own skin, and feeling and looking at that of others. One evening, during the access of his fancied disorder, when many young ladies were standing up for a country dance, he caused a wonderful consternation amongst these charming creatures by walking slowly along the row of girls and curiously surveying them, placing his eyes close to their necks and bosoms, and feeling their breasts and bare arms, in order to ascertain whether any of the fair ones had taken the horrible disease. He proceeded with so much gravity and seriousness, and his looks were so woe-begone, that they did not resist, or resent, the extraordinary liberties, but looked terrified, and as if they were about to undergo some severe surgical operation at his hands. Their partners were stand-

ing opposite in silent and angry amazement, unable to decide in what way the strange manipulations were to be taken; yet nobody interrupted his heart-broken handlings, which seemed, from his dejected air, to be preparatory to cutting his own throat. At last the lady of the house perceived what the young philosopher was about, and by assuring him that not one of the young ladies, as she had herself ascertained, had been infected, and, with gentle expostulations, induced him to desist, and to suffer the dancing to proceed without farther examinations.

The monstrous delusion continued for some days; with the aspect of grim despair he came stealthily and opened the bosom of my shirt several times a day, and minutely inspected my skin, shaking his head, and by his distressed mien plainly signifying that he was not by any means satisfied with the state of my health. He also quietly drew up my sleeves, and by rubbing it investigated the skin of my arms; he also measured my legs and ankles, spanning them with a convulsive grasp. "Bysshe, we both have the legs and the skin of an elephant, but neither of us has his sagacity!" He shook his head in sad, silent disapproval; to jest in the very jaws of death was hardened insensibility, not genuine philosophy. He opened in like manner the bosoms and viewed the skin of his other associates, and even of strangers. Nor did females escape his

curious scrutiny, nor were they particularly solicitous to avoid it; so impressive were the solemnity and gravity, and the profound melancholy of his fear-stricken and awe-inspiring aspect, that there could be no doubt of the innocence and purity of his intentions: and if he had proceeded to more private examinations and more delicate investigations, the young ladies would unquestionably have submitted themselves with reverence to his researches, which, however, were arrested by authority in the case of the fair dancers before they had greatly exceeded the bounds of decorum.

This strange fancy continued to afflict him for several weeks, and to divert, or distress, his friends, and then it was forgotten as suddenly as it had been taken up, and gave place to more cheerful reminiscences, or forebodings: he was able to listen to, or even occasionally, but rarely, to relate himself droll stories. One of them, as it is perfectly innocent, may be repeated without envy or calumny: it had occurred two or three years before.

He called one morning on an acquaintance in London, and saluted the door, as he was wont to do, with a thundering rap, and followed it up with a corresponding application to the bell. His invocation, although sufficiently audible, was not answered. The injunction, "rap and ring," was never thrown away upon him; he made his coming heard.

The summons was repeated with increased energy, and he was just about to try the effect of a third attack, for he was naturally and habitually impatient, when the door was partially opened, and the good-natured and obliging Mr. Graham addressed him with extreme trepidation over the chain, solemnly assuring him that he was the master of the house, and the only man who resided in it. "Why, what the devil is the matter here, Graham?" The exclamation and a burst of shrill, shrieking laughter led to an explanation, and the tone of Mr. Graham's nerves was so much restored, that he was able to unhook the chain and admit him.

Having carefully barricaded the door, he conducted Bysshe up-stairs into the front bed-room He stooped down, and held a whispered conversation for some time with a person under the bed, and after a long parley and often-repeated assurances, crawled forth into the light, covered with flue and feathers, the Platonic lover, for such he was. He was greatly agitated at first, but having composed himself by degrees, he proceeded to relate the strange story of his amour.

In his accustomed solitary walks about the streets of London he had fallen in with a lady, still reasonably young and passably good-looking, who seemed to be desirous of making his acquaintance. He entered into conversation with her, and they formed

a philosophical friendship on the instant, and on the spot. They used to meet and walk together, and converse; to converse after their own peculiar fashion; for the lady, being excessively loquacious, said everything, and the gentleman, on the contrary, being remarkably taciturn, said nothing. They also corresponded; her voluminous epistles arrived daily, and were answered by his letters of a moderate length. A shower overtook the happy pair one morning in their walk, a coach was called to convey the lady to her home, or rather to set her down prudently near it. They took their seats, and toddled on together, the fair one discoursing, with her accustomed volubility, of the nature of love in the abstract, and her mute adorer listening with due and delighted attention. But presently the lady became vehemently disturbed; she pointed out with extreme and overwhelming emotion a suspicious hackney coach, which she declared was following them; it contained her jealous husband; he would overtake and exterminate them both. The lover sat as far back as he could, to conceal himself, and not venturing to look out of the window, he took all on trust, on the lady's word. The chase continued; she declared they were undone; to baffle pursuit, they drove about in different directions, for several hours; eventually, the enemy's coach was no longer in sight; it was the moment to escape; they must

part; she would drive homewards; and the gallant lover must take to his heels, and make the best of his way to some place of security, for if her cruel husband caught him, he would inevitably murder him. The frightened lover ran straight home, like a hunted cat; the fair object had terrified him so completely that he fancied he was followed and watched, and that the injured, or rather the offended husband, had seen him enter his door. Hence the protection of Mr. Graham, and all the notable precautions and expedients upon which Shelley had dropped. The state of apprehension was cruel. His father was very particular, a man of exemplary piety, who had a violent antipathy to sighs and amorous glances, and if he should detect any attachment, Platonic or other, he would certainly barbecue him. The son was not pious, but he also was particular; he had a particular dislike to stand a shot, and a particular aversion for gun-shot wounds, which had been increased by his observations in walking the hospitals. It was horrible to think that a causelessly jealous, narrow-minded monster might come at any moment, pull him out from under his bed by the leg, and shoot him dead in his own bed-room! Bysshe loved a bit of romance, a perilous adventure, a hair-breadth escape: he stood and listened to the tale, quivering with delight.

"But you have got her letters! Where are they?

Where are they? Show them to me;—let me see them. You may trust me!"

A pile of letters was produced—of letters crossed and recrossed, and crossed again. Bysshe caught up one, and began to read it eagerly; after hurrying over a few pages, he threw it down, and cried out:

"She is mad! She is mad! The woman is mad, raving mad!"

Upon a calm, deliberate examination of the correspondence, it was manifest, even to the lover himself, that such was really the case. He had got hold of a mad woman, or rather she had got hold of him. She was possibly out on furlough, and a fresh access having appeared, the pursuit, if she had actually been pursued, was not by an unkind husband, with destructive swords and pistols, but by a kind keeper with a well-aired, conservative strait waistcoat. The existence of a husband probably was but a hallucination of the mind; and the loved one was some poor, insane spinster. Not deeming it expedient to look out of the window, he admitted that he had never seen the pursuing coach.

I asked Bysshe what the attractive lunatic's letters were about. The passages which I read treated exclusively of Hermes Trismegistus, to whom the lady compared her Platonic, and somewhat frigid and apathetic lover. Whether Hermes Trismegistus

also concealed himself under his bed, when he had made too free with the wife of Thoth Moses, and had rashly stirred up jealousy in Egypt, she did not state.

> "With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
> The spirit of Plato."

Nor did she say whether the operation of unsphering was effected by drawing him with terriers, or otherwise, from under the bed, like an earthed fox, or a badger, from his hiding-place. The frame of Shelley's mind, by nature and habit, was serious—melancholy, but that he had no feeling for the comic was not true; he delighted to tell this droll tale to his female friends; to tell it dramatically, acting parts of it, and shrieking with paroxysms of the wildest laughter. He had a like, but a longer tale about another acquaintance, who took up with, or took off with a mad woman; a right merry and conceited geste it is, but it belongs to a subsequent period. Yet by an ill-timed jest have I sometimes offended him;—for example: He was speaking with somewhat unreasonable displeasure of his father's relish for port wine:

"Your father reminded me forcibly of Milton's Comus."

"How is that possible? It is absurd!"

"It is possible and true. Comus, who must have

been a good judge of wine, said to the lady Alice of the brothers, Egerton, much to the credit of themselves and of the hospitality of Ludlow Castle,

'Their Port was more than human.'

A brother poet could not bear that the quaint majesty of Milton's "Masque" should furnish a handle for a paltry pun; and he was right.

The cousins, with whom we had formerly associated, had quitted London, and were gone to complete their medical education, if I mistake not, at Edinburgh; they were good-natured and obliging, but insipid and insensible, and incapable of comprehending Bysshe's poetical and philosophical flights of fancy. He never mentioned them.

He saw nothing of his own relatives, but agreeable associates were not wanting, neither were intruders nor obtruders. There was no end of obtrusion; the word intrusion is not strong enough. One person wanted to teach Harriet Italian; another, probably, would have given, or sold, to Eliza instructions in Hebrew, or Arabic; but the greater number, without any excuse or pretence, forced themselves upon him. He was a rock to which limpets stuck fast, and periwinkles attached themselves. Queen Mab was now printed, but it was not published, I believe; it was not publicly exposed for sale, but copies had been privately distributed to friends. The poem had

attracted attention. Shelley is the only modern poet whose verses uniformly appear to be inspired; no other poet of recent times is so completely and universally under the influence of inspiration. The earliest, the most hasty, the least finished, the most unformed and irregular of his poems have, notwithstanding their manifold defects, something superhuman about them. They seem to have been breathed, not by a mere mortal, but by some god or demon. His writings are invariably demoniacal, plainly the compositions of a demoniacal man. The least striking and complete of his productions has a preternatural air and tone. Of other poets, his contemporaries, the masterpieces are sometimes good, very good indeed; it would be unjust to deny it. But the trundling of a wheelbarrow cannot be compared to the pace of a race-horse, to the bounding of an antelope, or to the flight of an eagle, although it may often happen that the barrow is admirably trundled by a robust and active navigator —by the choicest flower of hodmen; still, there cannot be any comparison between the different modes of progression.

Shelley was uniformly a gentleman, eminently and strikingly such, and his Muse is always a lady. In all their dealings with him, and they were many and various, the nine sacred sisters conducted themselves like nine gentlewomen; whilst vulgarity was

too commonly the characteristic feature of the poetry of coetaneous writers. This odious quality is of course consummate in the productions of the Cockney versifiers; there was something low-lived about the Lake school. And the chief of the romantic style wrote about barons and knights, it is true; but it is equally true that Sir Walter Scott spoke of these aristocratical personages, not as if he was one of themselves, but as if he had been their factor, steward, or land-agent.

It has been affirmed that "it was not until Shelley resided in Italy that he made Plato his study." It is quite true that he had not read much of the dialogues of Plato in the original Greek before; but he had long been familiar with his philosophy by means of translations; and he had imbibed, at a very early age, his doctrines and theories at second hand. "Queen Mab" is the production of a Platonist incontestably; and if the great master of the Academy were to read it, he would at once acknowledge the author for a disciple—for a favoured and a favourite one.

A big and burly Quaker, the proprietor of a large soke-mill, with a considerable water-power, whose profits and privileges were trenched upon by steam-mills, once said to me: "It is perfectly certain that God Almighty never intended that his creatures should grind corn by steam!" A Quaker—a vessel

of direct immediate inspiration—may readily attain to perfect certainty in such a matter; but it is not apparent how persons placed in a less commanding position than a member of the Society of Friends can obtain it.

The text of the poem demonstrates that the Divine Poet was not less familiar with the counsels of deities, than our valued friend, the miller. "What is the use of such poetry? What is the use of any poetry?" has sometimes been asked. We may ask, in our turn, what is use? Of what use is poetry? It is of no use to the farmer, as a farmer; it will not make the grass grow; it will not keep the fly from the turnips, or mildew from the wheat; it will not drain a piece of boggy land, and so kill the rushes.

"I never read Paradise Lost," said a celebrated Cambridge mathematician.

"But you must read it; everybody has read Milton's great epic.'

"Well, as it is absolutely necessary, I will read it."

After a short respite the mathematician said to his friend: "I have read your famous poem. I read it attentively; but what does it prove? There is more instruction in half a page of Euclid! A man might read Milton's poem a hundred, aye, a thousand times, and he would never learn that the

angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal!"

What does "Queen Mab" prove? If the Cambridge mathematician had read it, he would have found that it proved even less than "Paradise Lost." The whole poem is eminently, excessively spiritual; replete with imaginary, unearthly creations. It has been ignorantly stigmatized as atheistical. On the contrary, it is especially theistical, full of divinity obscurely shadowed forth. It is altogether unphilosophical, if indeed the notes are to be accounted philosophical. The text presents throughout a strong and a strange contrast to the commentary. It glows, notwithstanding, with an ardent, a wild love of liberty, more particularly of the absolute, unrestrained liberty of thought and of speech, often extreme, sometimes extravagant, running occasionally even into rhapsody. The tendency of the verse is unfortunately oppressed and weighed down by the prose. By verse everything may be demanded; to verse everything may be conceded; for the heavenly enthusiasm, the divine rapture of the poet, his celestial and preternatural inspiration, afford an undeniable excuse, a license for all excesses. But prose is accounted of a more practical nature, and it cannot claim the like indulgence of interpretation. It was unwise, injudicious, imprudent, unfortunate, and injurious to have appended notes, so-called

philosophical. The notes have little to recommend them—little that is original; they consist chiefly of excerpts from the writings of Paine, Godwin, and others. Whatever was startling in these is rendered more offensive by being set out in detached fragments, without the modifications, qualifications, conditions, and softenings, which are found in the works from whence they were taken; when they are read in their proper and natural position, with all their antecedents and consequents, whatever seems crude and repulsive is much mitigated and corrected. But when harsh paradoxes were brought out strongly in separate, segregated passages, the implied adoption of the sentiments and dogmas of their several authors becomes in its nakedness indecent and shocking; and the violent opinions promulgated in the commentary seem to give a meaning to the poem itself which does not in reality belong to it, and could never have been fairly deduced from it. The common proceeding of modern times, that the poet should be at once, and in his own person, both poet and commentator,—that he should compose not only verses, but annotations upon his own verses, is preposterous.

It is hard to comprehend how Juvenal could be not merely Juvenal, but Ruperti likewise; Persius, Bond as well as Persius. The contemporaries of these two great satirical poets did not require coeval

illustrations; the powerful verses of the vigorous, unsparing satirists were sufficiently intelligible. It was only through lapse of time, change of circum stances and social conditions, and the failure of various sources of information, that notes became necessary, in order to make plain what before had been plain enough of itself to every instructed and intelligent reader. The self-annotating poet would compel us to imagine that Virgil was Servius, as well as Virgil; and that Pindar was the author of the excellent and copious scholia upon his exalted odes, as well as of the odes themselves; that Homer was Didymus, or even Eustathius, and composed the voluminous commentary on his divine poems, called the Horn of Amalthea, which is usually ascribed to the most erudite Archbishop of Salonichi. The Georgics and the Works and Days would probably have been less acceptable to Roman and Grecian readers, if they had been loaded at their first advent with heavy ballast, like Darwin's ponderous commentary on his Loves of the Plants. A poet who cannot write verses, that do not need a perpetual comment to render them comprehensible, is certainly not competent to write verses; he should confine himself to the more congenial and humbler duty of writing notes upon the verses of others. Such a prosaic poet is apt to betray himself, and to forget that he is not writing notes when he should

be writing verses. A historian who explains his meaning, not in the text, but at the foot of his pages, will probably produce very good notes, but a very indifferent history.

It will be necessary to return to the notes on "Queen Mab," and to speak hereafter of the purposes to which they were foolishly applied and fraudulently perverted: insomuch so, that his queen proved to be—

> "A fiend, a fairy, pitiless and rough:
> A wolf. Nay, worse!"

Shelley had every qualification that a poet ought to possess, the highest qualifications in the most luxuriant and lavish abundance; but few, or none, of those which constitute a patient, painful, careful commentator. He lived and moved and had his being under the absolute, despotical empire of a vivid, fervid fancy, as his illusion respecting elephantiasis demonstrates. The legendary tales and popular traditions, which he had heard as a child, had taken complete possession of his imagination at a very early age, such as the marvels of the Forest of St. Leonard in Sussex; of St. Leonard, the godson of Clovis; the recluse, the solitary, the hermit; the inhabitant of the forests of the Limousin; the deliverer of prisoners, and the slayer of huge serpents. It was under the last attribute that he was

chiefly venerated. The mountains and waterfalls of Wales and Cumberland, the English and Irish lakes leave their image on the fancy and memory of all who behold them; that the impression of these striking objects was deeper and more sensible in him, than in an ordinary spectator, is undeniable; and he gave many and frequent proofs how profoundly the resistless beauties of these miracles of nature had entered into his inmost soul, and had become integral portions of himself and of his existence. But the poetic faculty of turning himself mentally into the subject of his poem, of metamorphosing himself internally into an attendant spirit, into Titania, Queen Mab herself, was conspicuous and astonishing. This faculty, I apprehend—for, claiming no fellowship myself with poets, I speak on this topic doubtingly and under correction—is common to all true poets. In trifling matters, moreover, which were unconnected with, and unworthy of, poetic themes, he could become, I should say rather he became, involuntarily and unconsciously, the very personage of whom any remarkable incident was related, however trivial it might be, that forcibly struck his impressible soul. It would be tedious to offer many examples, and improper not to present any: two or three instances may be given; the more insignificant they are the more plainly will they illustrate his disposition and

habit to adopt the situation, the feelings, the colour of other persons.

I told Bysshe one day that I had been lately in society where short-hand had become the subject of conversation. He was not himself a proficient in this art, he would never have had the patience to learn it; but he would sometimes take up a piece of paper covered with writing in short-hand, and holding it commonly the wrong way upwards, he would gaze upon it a long time in mute amazement. Some short-hand writer was mentioned, I told him, not a professional stenographer, but a man of learning and letters, a person of great talent and not less eccentricity. He wrote short-hand much, and seeking to improve a useful art, he wrote shorter and shorter, and abbreviated daily more and more, and however little he might write, and however much he might abbreviate, he was always able to read his notes with equal, or nearly equal, facility. At last he carried his abbreviation to such an extent that he wrote absolutely nothing. Some said that he still continued to read what he had written, or rather what he had not written. According to others, he was greatly astonished when he had put down nothing whatever, not a single character, not one mark, on taking up his note book, after the interval of a few days, to find that he was unable to decipher the blank pages. I have often seen Bysshe

sitting with a piece of paper in his hand, his eyes fixed intently on the uninscribed leaf, seriously and earnestly studying it. It was evident that he had been changed inwardly into the surprised and disappointed abbreviator, vainly trying to recall what had never existed. Once whilst he was thus occupied he anxiously inquired—

"Who invented short-hand?"

"Tiro, it is believed."

"And who was Tiro, pray?"

"He was Cicero's clerk."

"Was Tiro really the name of Cicero's clerk."

"Yes! And Tire, Oh! was no bad name for the clerk of so famous an orator! How tired the poor fellow must have been listening all day to his master's copious eloquence!"

Soon afterwards he was sitting alone in a corner, his countenance expressive of extreme dejection, and the utmost weariness. "Oh! Tire, Oh!" he suddenly exclaimed, yawning aloud, yawning as heartily as if he had heard out the whole of the orations against Verres. His lively fancy had transmuted him into the swunk freedman, and in the spirit he had been in the Senate, or the Forum, where he had been bored to death by the endless prosing of the great master of Roman eloquence.

"But Tiro was not a mere clerk, an amanuensis; he was a person of ability, of learning! yes, and of

considerable ingenuity, for he was the inventor of short-hand." "That was a great invention, was it not?" "It was, but possibly he sometimes thought that of short speeches would have been a still greater!" Shelley abhorred a pun. "It snaps the thread of discourse, blows out the candle, and puts an end at once to all conversation. It is like a troublesome and odious insect, a wasp. No! It wants the dignity of a wasp, it is a mosquito, a gnat! But you can do anything with me, you can sometimes even reconcile me to a pun!" Shelley used to pick the turpentine off fir-trees, and eat it with a relish, or in walking through a pine wood he would apply his tongue to a larch, and lick it as it oozed in a liquid state from the bark. I never met with anyone else who had the same taste. I have expostulated with him on the subject, and of course in vain; and I once related to him a little apologue, which was rather more efficacious. I was once at a ball, a very pleasant one it was, and we were all dancing away merrily, but we were obliged to desist, for all on a sudden the fiddlers stopped in the middle of a tune; we told them to play on, but they answered, we cannot; "We cannot go on with our music, because that rascal, Bysshe, has eaten up all our rosin!" Sometimes when he was creeping stealthily up to a fir-tree, that he might lick it, my fable of the poet and the fiddler, would come into his head, and

he would turn aside laughing. The broken up ball, the interrupted country dance, the enraged musicians, the whole scene appeared in a moment before his eyes. "And so you were obliged to give up dancing? Pray what did your partner say? How did she like it? Was she not much disappointed? Was she not very angry with me?" It has often happened that I being so much with the Divine Poet, being constantly indeed in his company, whenever my avocations would permit, was taken for him. Not that we were at all like one another, but persons who knew who we were, who knew the two friends, but did not know which was which, frequently addressed me for him, persons of both sexes; and this occurred during the whole period of our intimacy.

I sometimes heard extraordinary things which I will not repeat, inasmuch as the communications were made in confidence, although it was a mistaken confidence, yet never misplaced. I have many times been accosted in society—in elegant society—as Mr. Shelley; sometimes I at once rectified the error, but sometimes, through a curiosity, not altogether inexcusable, I hope, I have suffered the delusion to continue for a while.

"You are Mr. Shelley, are you not?"

"Well, and what then?"

I am happy to add, that when I explained myself,

no confusion, no embarrassment ensued. I was esteemed a faithful Achates; what had been confided was not meant for my ear, but for that of Eneas; whether Dido, the queen, or the celestial Venus herself, or her companions, the Graces, or some half goddess, one of her attendant nymphs, spoke to me, as if I were of a heavenly origin, I have answered thus, and perhaps not imprudently: "I am glad you think so favourably of my friend; I will tell him what you say."

"Pray do; you will not forget!"

It is probable that Bysshe was now and then in like manner taken for his friend; but I never was informed by him, that this had actually happened. One misapprehension was of so comical a character that it ought to be related; and since, most assuredly, the Loves and Graces were not concerned in the matter, there can be no scruples of delicacy in telling the adventure just as it fell out. I called at his lodgings one afternoon in the summer to walk together, as we were wont. He was not at home, but he had left a message for me, that if I went to the residence of a common friend, I should not fail to find him there. I at once repaired thither, and was kindly received, as I invariably was. He had not arrived, but if I would stay to dinner, I should doubtless see him, for he would come, if not to dinner, for certain in the course of the evening. I

readily consented to the proposal, and I sat chatting in the drawing-room, hearing the news of the day, and much admiration and many commendations of my incomparable friend, such as I invariably heard wherever he was known. A bell gave warning that dinner would be served in half-an-hour, and I was conducted up-stairs into the front bed-room to wash my hands. Whilst I was thus employed two ill-looking fellows burst abruptly into the room; one of them locked the door and set his back against it, telling me that he arrested me; that I was his prisoner. He was a short, stout man. The other, a long, lean fellow, showed me a writ, and presented me with a copy of it.

"What does all this mean?" I asked.

"You know very well, you are Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelley!"

"You are pleased to say that I am."

"We know very well that you are the defendant; you need not try to persuade us that you are not!"

"Then I will not try!"

Upon this the bailiffs became rather insolent, and were inclined to be abusive. I finished washing myself and then sat down by the window; the men stood in the middle of the room growling and grumbling. In ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, there was a gentle tap at the door; the man who had

locked it opened it,—a spare, white-faced fellow dressed in black, like an undertaker's man, entered. He looked at me with surprise, staring hard, and whispered something to the bailiffs, who seemed still more astonished than he was. They then threw open the door and told me I was at liberty, and might depart; it was a mistake. John Doe and Richard Roe, and their friend in mourning, began to offer excuses, explanations, and apologies, assuring me that they always acted on the best information, and seldom made mistakes. I did not answer, but walked down to dinner in silence. How long they remained in the bed-room, whether they were converted by the influences of the locality to a vegetable diet, and induced to return to nature, or what became of these worthies I know not, for I never fell in with any of the party again.

The arrest, as I afterwards learnt, was for the price of the good Harriet's fine, new carriage. After such an indignity, and in order to wipe off the stigma, I ought to have had a ride, and a good long one, too, in the carriage; but I had not that satisfaction; I never even saw the vehicle, nor heard of it, indeed, except on this occasion. Whenever any act of signal folly, extraordinary indiscretion and insane extravagance was to be perpetrated, I was never informed of it, and certainly there was no obligation to tell me. And without doubt it was better that

it should be so, in order that the foster-child of the Muses might fulfil his high destinies; if he could have followed the humble suggestions of ordinary prudence—if he could have been guided by common-place advice and common-sense, the tenor of his innocent, guileless life would have been more tranquil, but prosaic, the poetical elements being starved and stinted.

It is a well founded and just maxim, that things are best known from their opposites. It is also true, that many things which are most dissimilar, have yet some strong and striking point of resemblance: it is true, moreover, of persons.

I have frequently instituted in my own mind a comparison between two people, with whom I was well acquainted, and who appear to have been the most unlike of mankind. Each of the parties would have been shocked and deeply offended at being likened to the other; each would have felt an antipathy for the other, and an invincible repugnance to be brought into contact, or collision. The ardent and zealous admirers of both, being equally bigoted in their respective views, would have been displeased and alarmed at the imputation of the slightest and most distant resemblance; and yet there was in many respects the strongest similarity.

It would have been practicable, and perhaps

profitable, to have written the lives of both these distinguished individuals, and to have drawn, after the manner of Plutarch, an ethical parallel between them; a parallel, or comparison of the lives of my incomparable friend, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and of my justly celebrated relative, poor Granville Sharp.

Amongst my earliest and firmest recollections are the numerous and wonderful particulars which I continually heard of my "Cousins Sharp," and the many peculiarities which I witnessed myself in such of the members of that very remarkable family whom I had seen and known. "Your cousin Sharp." The affectionate appellation, "Cousin," was still in frequent use in the North of England, when I was a boy; and it was adopted sometimes when its application was not strictly correct. We could certainly claim no consanguinity with the blood of the Sharps: they were the grand-children of Dr. John Sharp, Archbishop of York, who was the son of a wool-stapler in the West Riding of Yorkshire; but I believe some affinity, some connection by marriage, subsisted; but I do not at present remember what it was, and it is immaterial. Poor Granville was long and well known for many ingenious and original, but whimsical speculations, of a description totally alien and averse from the poetical and philosophical fancies of Shelley. He

rendered himself illustrious by his crusade against and victory over the Slave Trade and Slavery, and he won thereby a monument among the renowned dead in Westminster Abbey. Poor Granville abolished slavery; others, more worldly wise and practical men, who sought and found their own advantage in it, carried out the details; and finally, as is uniformly the case in all great changes, a rabble rout of impostors and mountebanks shouted in triumph at the ultimate consummation of his success. But the meek, single-hearted, innocent old man, of infinite singularity and credulity, and entire simplicity, did the deed. To relate his successful progress from the famous case of Somerset, the Negro, to his last act in that career, would be a long story and quite foreign to my present purpose. At the time when I first came to London, the venerable apostle of Negro Emancipation resided in chambers in the Temple, a solitary bachelor; indeed, he in a manner died there. I had the happiness to see occasionally, as a young man, one whom I had known as a school-boy; and I have passed fresh from Granville to Shelley, and from Shelley to Granville. How different, and yet how like! The thought soon struck me forcibly, and it grew in strength. Both were equally impressible and unimpressible; both alike inaccessible to reason, with more than a tinge of fanaticism, alike bigoted

to opposite and discordant fancies; of ascetic lives, more than Spartan frugality, temperance, and austerity; harsh to themselves alone, to others charitable, generous, profuse, lavish. Of childish credulity, ready to believe, because it was impossible; full of rash reliance, and a blind credence in the professions of the unworthy. But the most remarkable point of resemblance was this, that both these celebrated men, always desiring to do nothing but good, did in fact nothing but mischief. My poor cousin Granville, the hoary-headed apostle of benevolence, ruined, utterly ruined and destroyed, the finest, richest, and happiest of the dependencies of the Crown of Great Britain. It is true, that the youthful, philosophical philanthropist never took any serious, resolute, permanent part in public affairs, and therefore never had an opportunity to do mischief by wholesale and on a grand scale. But his hasty, inconsiderate bounty in private life, by encouraging laziness, promoting dependence, and teaching the objects of his indiscriminate generosity to indulge unreasonable expectations, was the fertile source of much evil; and by his lavish charity he hampered, impoverished and punished himself, and suffered needless and unmerited poverty and privations. Not only poor Granville, but the whole family of Sharp were equally culpable in this respect. I have heard painfully laughable examples of their

beneficent indiscretions, demonstrating, that, in an artificial state of society, a little knowledge of human nature and of the world is indispensable to prevent the open-handed and open-hearted giver inflicting injuries by his gifts; something of the subtlety of the serpent must be combined with the simplicity of the dove in the distribution of eleemosynary funds. In early life I heard histories of the Christian achievements, many of them very ludicrous, of this excellent family, more particularly in connection with the much vaunted charities at Bamburgh. If it should ever be deemed expedient by authority, as the public voice loudly declares that it is, to institute a searching inquiry into the disposal of the munificent bequests of Lord Crewe, and to learn from his trustees in what manner their ample funds and extensive patronage have been expended and exercised; the real nature, actual working, and ultimate consequences of the proceedings of the amiable house of Sharp will be laid open; and whether their dealings with this large mass of property form an exception to the ordinary results of their indiscreet benevolence, will fully appear.

An open, public inquiry, is required, if any real good is to be effected; the futile and childish investigations of charity commissioners with closed doors, have proved at best useless. The Charity Commission, it has been said, commenced in

folly, and being laid hold of by the strong hand of an able and unscrupulous man, terminated in knavery.

If there were points of contact, of strong and striking similarity, between these two illustrious individuals, as most assuredly there were, there were also points of repulsion, of utter and total dissimilarity. No temperament was ever less poetical than that of Granville Sharp. His own peculiar course had been clearly marked out for him, and he accomplished it nobly. It was fanciful and fantastical enough, in truth, but not imaginative. Urania had imparted to him largely a knowledge of heavenly things; but neither she nor her sacred sisters had touched his pure and holy lips with a live coal kindled on the altar of Apollo.

It was wisely ordained that Shelley also should fulfil his destinies—his high destinies, which carried him away impetuously in a different and opposite direction. It was certainly ordained that he should become a divine poet. The poetic faculty is surely divine. A poet is a maker—a creator; and creation is the highest power and energy of divinity. To the Poet is granted a portion of the loftiest and most wonderful attributes of the Supreme Creator: he is constituted and appointed a creator; and this, poor Granville never was.

It was my fortune to be once, and only once, in

the company of a personage who has shone forth conspicuously in Bysshe's correspondence, under two very different phases; she had been for some time an inmate of his solitary mansions in Wales. At her first coming to dwell with him in the desert, she was warmly recommended to correspondents, and more particularly to William Godwin, and hailed with a kind of angelic salutation, as blessed amongst women; as a tower-proof, fire-proof, bomb-proof blue; free from and above all prejudices; and a resolute champion of the Rights of Women. The author of "St. Leon" seems to have received the recommendation of the author of "St. Irvyn" rather coldly. A grocer never likes figs; and possibly he had already heard quite enough about the "Rights of Women:" he did not take the bait. At a period not long subsequent, she is stigmatised as dirty, androgynous, and, indeed, a brown demon.

I called, one Sunday morning, I think at some hotel, to walk and dine. It was soon after their return from Wales; and in due order it ought to have been noticed before; but the chronology of such an interview need not be exact. The heroine was tall and thin, bony and masculine, of a dark complexion; and the symbol of male wisdom, a beard, was not entirely wanting. She was neither young nor old; not handsome—not absolutely ill-looking. She had been a governess and a school-

mistress, as was sufficiently indicated by a prim, formal, didactic manner and speech. At first she possessed some influence over the young couple; but the charming Eliza would not tolerate any influence but her own. She had worked upon Harriet's feelings, and the good Harriet had succeeded in making his former favourite odious to Bysshe. It had been finally arranged that she was to depart—to go away that very evening—which was boasted of as a great blessing; and such, perhaps, it might have been, if there had been any valid and available security, that another and a greater bore would not soon succeed to the vacancy.

Bysshe could not walk with me; he was particularly engaged, as often happened, to go somewhere, and to perform some indispensable and important thing.

> "I can fly, or I can run,
> Quickly to the green earth's end,
> Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend;
> And from thence can soar as soon
> To the corners of the moon."

Harriet had a bad headache; so I was summarily condemned to walk with the two spinsters.

Accordingly, in execution of my sentence, I was turned over to them; and with the brown demon on my right arm and the black diamond on my left, we went forth into St. James's Park, and walked

there, and in the neighbouring parks, for a long time, a very long time. "These were my jewels," as Cornelia proudly exclaimed.

In the beginning, the fair rivals, the dark rivals, quarrelled with one another across me, to whom, however, they were both exceedingly civil,—deferential, I may say. The lovely Eliza attacked the foe with haughty contempt; the bearded preceptress defended herself and offended her enemy with meek contumacy. I never saw Eliza so much alive before or since. I never knew her come out so decidedly. For some time, there was hit for hit delivered on both sides with calm, soft acrimony, but by degrees the jangling abated, and the angel on my left collapsed; she relapsed into her normal condition of langnor, of languor at the last gasp. I then turned to the angel on my right, and interrogated her about the Rights of Women, respectfully requesting to be informed what they were. She received my request graciously, and immediately complied with it. The accents of wisdom began to flow in a gentle, continuous stream from her bearded lips. I must confess I could not comprehend what these rights were; or, to speak more correctly, I could not discover what were the obstacles that prevented females, who valued their peculiar whims and fancies termed by her their rights, from indulging them. I represented my view of the matter to the scholastic

Minerva, and she could not deny that all women, emancipated from the control of parents and guardians, might act as they pleased in such matters.

The conversation, which went on agreeably enough with Wisdom on my right side, was extremely distasteful to Beauty on my left. Eliza knew nothing of the Rights of Women, or of anything else. She was, therefore condemned to a long and ignominious silence, whilst the grand principles by which feminine felicity is to be insured were powerfully and elaborately expounded.

"How could you talk to that nasty creature so much? How could you permit her to prate so long to you?" said the lovely Eliza, peevishly, when she took her arm out of mine at the door, on returning home to dinner. "Why did you encourage her? Harriet will be seriously displeased with you, I assure you; she will be very angry!"

The indignation of the good Harriet, if it really was excited, must have been too big for utterance: I never heard of it. She merely asked, "Were you not tired of the Brown Demon?"

Most infernally! might have been an appropriate answer; and to say the truth, which I did not dare to say, I was equally weary of Angel and Devil.

Dinner came off tranquilly, and the evening passed away pleasantly enough, for it was fully understood on all sides that she was to take her departure that

night, which arrangement apparently was doubtful in the morning. There being little conversation during tea, I ventured to inquire again about the Rights of Women. The Goddess of Reason began incontinently to lecture with fluency and animation. Presently Bysshe quitted his chair, and came and stood before her, listening with attention, and looking enthusiastic, as if his former interest had in some measure revived. The sisters eyed him with manifest displeasure, as a person holding treasonable communications with a public enemy.

CHAPTER XI.

At the appointed hour a coach was called, and the Defender of the Faith and of her sex took her leave of us freely, quietly, and civilly; and being fairly gone with all her boxes and band-boxes never to return,—and she never did return,—the whole party believed that they were very happy, having had a good deliverance, having been freed from a load that had become of late intolerable. For my own part, not having felt the burthen, I could not participate in their joy. She appeared to me a fair average specimen of a schoolmistress, and well adapted in every respect for the employment, which she had long exercised, and might doubtless long continue to exercise with advantage. Certainly there was nothing about her to justify either the raptures at meeting her, or the excessive delight at parting. I could only marvel, as I have constantly marvelled, at the thick-coming fancies of my imaginative friend.

I never saw the Brown Demon again; I never heard more of her. Save that the lovely yet spiteful Eliza, who could not soon forgive, once whispered, "If you only knew how filthily dirty she is, you would not come near her!" This censure might mean no more, than that the unprejudiced, intellectual being does not brush her hair nearly long enough; does not spend more, would you believe it, than eight hours a day "in sleeking her soft alluring locks!"

The correspondence shows, that instruction in the Rights of Women was not obtained without a valuable consideration; but the amount does not appear. The regular system of organized plunder, of this hereafter, to which he was afterwards subject until the end of his life, and, indeed, even longer, had not yet commenced. Two or three of his more enlightened friends, it is true, advocates of the community of goods, simple creatures, utterly ignorant of the value of money, and sceptics as to the rights of property, had contrived already, now and then, to extract moderate sums out of his ill-furnished purse; and no doubt his Irish allies borrowed of him. The wrongs of an oppressed, injured, and insulted country could never be redressed by her patriotic and disinterested sons without a little private peculation, without levying toll. It was difficult, impossible, indeed, to obtain a correct estimate of the spoil, the spoilers were not communicative; there

were a certain secrecy and a mystery about Bysshe, which were impenetrable.

It is a popular superstition in some countries, that the goat passes one hour of the twenty-four every day in the infernal regions. However attentively that wild and active creature may be watched, it always disappears, it is said, during that period, and it is impossible to find it in its hour of absence, however diligent the search may be; wherever the goat may be, it always knows the shortest way to the Shades below; and if it be tied up, or otherwise confined, it is confidently asserted, and this at least is not improbable, that the animal grows exceedingly uneasy and restless.

I was often reminded of this picturesque and poetical legend by the habits of Shelley. He used to vanish in as abrupt and inexplicable a manner as a goat; to remove himself as effectually beyond the reach of pursuit, whenever he was at liberty; and restraint was not less irksome to him than to the free denizen of the mountains. Those who were acquainted with him could entertain no suspicion that his visit was ever paid to the infernal deities; his course assuredly was not downwards. The young poet was, peradventure, admitted for a season to celestial converse; his nature being rather demoniacal than human, he became the associate of higher intelligences; like the shepherd of Ascra, the Muses

themselves were personally present with him. He returned to mortal intercourse awe-stricken, having refreshed his fancy by the sight of glorious things, which he never revealed to others, not even to his most intimate friends.'

I have sometimes seen him standing a long while watching a goat patiently, and following. after it, for I had related the superstitious legend to him, and it captivated his fancy and pleased him prodigiously; and he would eye a goat, that came unexpectedly towards him, eagerly, and inquire with penetrating asking glances; "What news from Hades?"

The goat is a Dionysiacal quadruped; habitually given to scale Parnassus, to spring boldly from crag to crag on Helicon, to climb with ease to the highest summits of all the mountains of the poets; a sharer in Bacchic, Orphic, Eleusinian, and other mysteries; it is consentaneous with poetic reason and usages for poets, as well as for the mighty Pan and his satyrs, to trace affinities and similarities with the goat.

Shelley's delight was to read Homer, and it grew and strengthened with his years. He had a copy of the Grenville Homer, bound in russia, in two volumes, the Iliad in one, and the Odyssey in the other; one of these volumes was continually in his hand. It would be a curious problem to calculate how many times he read the whole

through. He devoured in silence, with greedy eyes, the goodly and legible characters often by firelight, seated on the rug, on a cushion, or a footstool, straining his sight, and striking a flame from the coals with the shovel, or whichsoever of the fire-irons he could first seize upon, remaining in front of the fire until the cheek next to it assumed the appearance of a roasted apple. And he would read some sublime passage aloud, if there was anyone at hand to listen, with extreme rapidity, animation and energy, raising his shrill voice, until it equalled the crowing of a cock; nor would he cease before he reached the end of the book, and then closing it, he laid it gently upon the ground, and lifting up his eyes to the ceiling, he exclaimed with heart-felt pleasure, "Hah!" remaining for some minutes in an attitude of veneration, wholly absorbed in pleasure and admiration.

It is for such readers, that great poets write!— In the same unceremonious posture and position he would pore over pages of some moralist, or metaphysician, whether he were an idealist, or a materialist. The close attention which he bestowed upon the advocates of materialism was exemplary. It is so easy, and so agreeable to believe, without examination, or inquiry, whatever we hear, and more especially what we read in books, whatever in short we see in print, that we can never be

sufficiently grateful to those meritorious persons, who will kindly take the trouble to doubt of, or dispute, anything: the claims of scepticism upon our gratitude are not duly recognised. The world is deeply indebted also to epicureans and materialists; it is a great benefit to mankind, that in every generation a small body of innocent, estimable, and apathetical men should be found ready to demonstrate practically, that their narrow sect cannot possibly flourish; that we cannot live upon this world alone.

Plato and Aristotle have fed thousands, but to whom did Epicurus ever give a morsel of bread?— It is a mark of an ignorant, an ill-bred fellow, to argue pertinaciously about facts, and to contradict every assertion respecting ordinary occurrences; so it is, on the other hand, the test of a scholar and a man of true genius to bring opinions fairly into review, and especially to cause those principles, which are held commonly to be the most firmly settled, to be discussed anew, by insinuating doubts, or suggesting something, that seems to be inconsistent with them; and gallantly to encourage the ventilation of the elements, and an examination of the foundations of knowledge, by offering to sustain the weaker side. To encourage those who would practise the art of taking aim, if we may allude to a favourite pastime, by throwing up his

hat, that they may take a shot at it; when a person is so courteous, it is surely most unkind, as some churls are wont to do, to discharge a pistol in his face!

During his protracted residence in London, and the vicinity of London, in the years 1813 and 1814, an auspicious, beneficial, and happy period, we had the good fortune to form a most agreeable intimacy with certain amiable and elegant friends and associates, whose favourite studies were the Italian language and literature; some of whom even had formerly resided in Italy,—a privilege which had been less generally enjoyed then, than now; and that advantage being more rare, they had profited more by it. It was confined in those days almost exclusively to persons of a certain station, of a liberal education, of ample leisure, competent fortune and cultivated minds; their position in society had been an introduction to the first people in the countries which they had visited, and these were of a far higher order than are at present to be met with in a land, that has since been severely scourged by cruel and noxious revolutions and violent political commotions fraught with ruin to individuals, and manifold and desolating troubles. By their salutary example, by gentle persuasions, and a soft and benign influence, they called the attention of my friend and myself to a participation

in their darling pursuits; and they powerfully promoted by their precious advice, assistance, and instructions, the invitation which we at once readily accepted, and our thoughts and our reading soon took the direction pointed out to us by our tasteful guides. I procured a sufficient apparatus of approved grammars and dictionaries, and bestowed much of my leisure upon them; Bysshe, a King in intellect, had always at his command a short and royal road to knowledge. It seemed to a superficial observer, that he rejected and despised the grammar and the dictionary, and all the ordinary aids of a student; this to a certain extent was the case, but to a certain extent only; he was impatient of such tardy methods of progression; nevertheless he sometimes availed himself of them, and when he condescended to be taught, like a mere mortal, which assuredly he was not, his eagle glance, his comprehensive grasp, his inconceivable quickness, and miraculous powers and faculty of apprehension, enabled him to seize and to master in minutes what his less highly gifted fellow-learners acquired in hours, or days, or weeks.

With much pleasure and profit, and not without a certain edification, we read together the fine poem of Tasso; and we kept together, side by side, in this our first exploit and invasion of the lovely language

of a lovely land. There was nothing in the slow progress of the long siege of the holy city, or in the quiet episodes, by which the principal narrative is varied, to stimulate his intense and insatiable curiosity, or provoke his constitutional impatience. At the termination of our joint perusal, the slip of paper was carefully placed in the handsome volume to mark our progress, and whenever we resumed our united study, I saw that it had been honourably suffered to remain at the page where we had left off; there had been no forestalling, no stealing a march. We thus proceeded steadily together, by an equable progression we advanced, and by regular approaches we took the sacred city, and finished the poem, our first task.

With mingled feelings of pleasure and regret we both quitted the graceful, tender, pious epic, being in our hearts more than half Crusaders, and not altogether indisposed to enlist under the consecrated banners of Godfrey.

When we came to our second author, it was different—our course of conjoint study no longer ran smooth; it was deranged; the partnership was broken up. The same slow rate of travelling would no longer satisfy my impatient colleague; Ariosto had excited, fascinated him. Bysshe soon discovered that the realms of romance and the intercourse of Paladins were his own proper, peculiar element: we

could no longer keep together in our chivalry. When I had a spare hour for octave rhymes, and took down the book for our lesson, I found that my adventurous comrade had gone ahead a canto or two; or, perhaps, that the mark had been transferred to another volume. In reading for the first time a composition of such overpowering, overwhelming interest—exciting, stimulating, provoking—it was absolutely impossible to wait for me, or for anyone; for Roland furiously mad through love, or even for the fair Angelica herself, much more to expect the uncertain and scant leisure of a law student. The Divine Poet eagerly devoured the marvellous production of a brother poet, returning to it incessantly, and reading it through repeatedly, again and again. He spoke of the unparalleled poem with wild rapture during our walks, and read aloud to me detached passages with energy and enthusiastic delight; but he could not control his feelings enough for us to go through the "Orlando Furioso" hand in hand, as we had marched to the conquest and liberation of Jerusalem: he soon left me to find my way, as I best might, out of the enchanted forest. The easy, flowing style of Ariosto presents fewer difficulties than the elaborate stanzas of Tasso, and was propitious to his speedy way. I proceeded alone steadily and methodically, grammar and dictionary at hand, and by the doubtful light

of Hoole's translation, whenever my other occupations permitted, to traverse forty-six cantos, comprised in six volumes, a long transit, it is true, but the charmed reader wishes it was much longer.

In extenuation of my comparative indifference and insensibility to the enchantments of the divine Ariosto, and in justice to myself, I must be permitted to add, that I was already acquainted, familiar indeed, with the story and incidents, having read the entire poem more than once, as it is rendered by the aforesaid John Hoole; read it with pleasure in a handsome 8vo edition, adorned with engravings, and well bound, a prize book won by a school-fellow at some former school; six goodly volumes pleasant to the memory even now, and still distinctly seen through a long vista of just fifty years.

To Bysshe it was a novelty, altogether new in matter and manner, in substance and in language; to me the language alone was unknown; he was unacquainted with the whole subject, and entirely ignorant of the tale of magic and marvels; it came upon him with all the force of a first impression, and the flood of unheard-of wonders bore him away in an irresistible torrent. We did not undertake to seek for a meaning in the abstruse and gloomy sublimity of Dante, until a subsequent period; of this in its proper place and in due course.

With respect to the other one of the four great Italian poets, of whom the numerous short poems can hardly be read through consecutively, we were sweetly and forcibly drawn towards him by a peculiar attraction, and were tied fast to his verses, spell-bound by a potent charm.

A most engaging lady of our circle had surrendered herself a fair prey to a kind of sweet melancholy, arising, as far as I could discover, from causes purely imaginary; a pensive, languid sadness, which gave a character, a grace, an interest to her society and conversation, but did not interfere in any way with the enjoyment of life, and the fullest exercise of the mental and animal functions. She required consolation, she said; she sought it, and found it at last in the poetry of Petrarch; and therefore she invariably began the day by reading attentively and repeatedly, as soon as she awoke in the morning, often learning it by heart,—a sonnet, or canzone,—going thus regularly through the book; meditating upon it; revolving it in her mind, and, as it were, feeding upon it in her soul. For a considerable period we saw her almost every day, at some time of the day; and soon after meeting it was quite in course to inquire, what was the sonnet of the day, and the desponding fair one immediately repeated it with becoming emotion; or producing her pocket Petrarch, which she always carried about

with her, and which by express testamentary direction was to be buried with her, she read it aloud with feeling; but if it was too touching to be thus given forth, she handed the minute volume to the inquirer, pointing out the proper poetic lesson in Love's scripture appointed for the day. She eloquently and not unskilfully expounded the text, which is frequently obscure and needs exposition, neatly clearing up the difficulties and displaying feelingly the beauties of sentiment and expression. She warmly recommended us, and all with whom she conversed, and who were likely to profit by good advice, to begin every day, as she herself did, by a snatch of tenderness. It would cast a pretty and a pleasing shade of sadness over the whole day; upon its business and its pleasures, mellowing and mitigating its joys, and softening and relieving its sorrows. Like all zealous persons, she sometimes seemed disposed to recommend that, by legislative enactment, all loyal subjects should be enjoined and required to begin in this manner every day of their lives.

Shelley assured her authoritatively, that when there was a perfect republic, the day would uniformly be opened in this fashion, and the assurance contented her.

Besides laying open to us the poem of the day; unfolding its true signification, and bringing it

down to the level of our comprehension, in which kind offices she never failed; some other choice passage was selected from the pocket volume, or from a larger and more legible edition, and it received, in like manner, a full explanation. Thus were we initiated gradually and efficiently, and in a most agreeable manner, in the mysteries of the amatory verses of the great poet of love. Petrarch, in a word, was her hero, the best and greatest of men, as Laura de Sades was the happiest of women; thrice and four times blessed to have been so beloved, besighed, and besonnetted by the prince of poets and of lovers. Bysshe entered at once fully into her views, and caught the soft infection, breathing the tenderest and sweetest melancholy, as every true poet ought. For my own part I was sensible of the value of her teaching, and was grateful for it; I felt and acknowledged the exquisite beauty, the admirable qualities of the great poet; and yet, with the levity of youth, I found pleasure in teazing her about her favourite. When she spoke with enthusiasm of Petrarch and his amours, I ventured to hint, that possibly his connexion with Laura was not so pure as she supposed. But this position was untenable; moreover it was ungenerous to suggest, even in jest, the possibility of frailty in the spotless Laura. I contented myself therefore with advancing, that his passion was very

tender and pretty, but it was unreal, a mere poetical figment, moonshine. He was in fact a great, fat prebendary of Padua, who after a hearty breakfast attended to the secular business of the day, particularly to ordering dinner, and went to his cathedral and sang in the choir. He came home, and made as good a dinner as was consistent with his intention of making a still better supper. He took a nap in his easy chair, woke up, and neighing after his neighbour's wife, wrote of his love, his anguish and despair, until the sun went down. He then took a walk in the cool of the evening; came home and made a tremendous supper, going within a hair's breadth of indigestion, and desiring to defy the gout. Having eaten and drunken well, the amorous ecclesiastic took sweet counsel together with a plump, tidy, young housekeeper, who was Ilia and Egeria to him; all that Laura herself could have been to the thundering canon, and more. Such was his Platonic passion!

The lady laughed at the profane sally, but admitted, that, with much gross exaggeration, there might be some little truth in the picture.

"Yet, can you conceive the author of that exquisite sonnet," and she repeated it in a most touching manner,—"can you conceive him ordering dinner?"

"Yes, I can, and a very good one too!"

"Can you imagine the person who composed that canzone," and she read a part of it, "doing what you said he did ?."

"What ? do you mean kissing his housekeeper ?"

"Yes!"

"Yes, I can, and very affectionately, too!"

Bysshe looked not a little shocked and hurt at first by what he considered an indecent irrision of the sacred character of the lover-poet; but he felt and owned at last, that it was not unreasonable or unnatural, in the course of a platonic attachment of forty years, that he should require a little of such consolation. Petrarch says himself that he loved Laura for forty years; he loved her for twenty years living, and for twenty years dead. And he thought the countenance of the tuneful canon, as represented in the numerous engravings of him after the portrait of the celebrated Giotto, was sensual; he disliked the expression, and often found fault with it, insisting either that it could *not* be a faithful likeness, or that the subject of the picture was not what he is generally believed to have been. But jokes apart, Petrarch is in truth a divine poet. As he loved and admired his Laura for full forty years, so have I humbly loved and admired him for the like, for a still longer period. I am still young enough, thank God! to be delighted by his immortal verses; and when I read them, it is impossible not to think with

esteem and gratitude of the charming friend, through whose kindness I was first introduced to him. The relative merits, however, of poets are measured by different standards of comparison. "Would you suppose, that much of Mr. Wordsworth's poetry was written in the dark; in total darkness? You will hardly credit it, but it is true, perfectly true!" A fussy, foolish little fellow, a banker in a country town, once said to me, "Many of the finest passages in his best poems, were written in the dark, when it was as dark as pitch; it is truly astonishing! You do not believe it; I cannot ask you to believe it; but it is true, he told me so himself!"

He explained by informing me, that the Lake bard was accustomed to place a pencil and paper by his bedside, and when a bright thought came to him between the sheets, he wrote it down instantly without striking a light, which was a slow process in an age of tinder-boxes, now obsolete, allowing time for fancies even less volatile than emanations from the lakes to evaporate; and thus secured it for the benefit of posterity. Through long habit he was able to write correctly and legibly in the dark.

"Can anything be more wonderful?" asked the little banker, in conclusion.

"Yes! To write in one's sleep, and to take short-hand notes of one's dreams."

"Really! You do not say so! I do not write

shorthand myself, but I know shorthand writers can do most surprising things."

I related this to Bysshe, who was much amused by it, and more taken by the notion of writing in the dark. He spoke more than once of various contrivances for facilitating it, and several times in emulation, or imitation, of Wordsworth carried pencil and paper to bed with him. But he succeeded very ill in his writing; he usually lost his pencil, or his paper, or both; and when he contrived to keep them, the writing was illegible. In these days it would be superfluous to learn to write in the dark; a light is now procured instantaneously by a lucifer match, and before its contents could leak out of the least retentive memory. As Shelley could not write verses in the dark, he never produced any such poetry as is found in Wordsworth's Night Thoughts. Wordsworth's chilly fancy being warmed by three Witney blankets and a good thick counterpane, he became truly a poet; his finest thoughts were hatched in bed, having been conceived in utter, palpable darkness. "Any man, who can write verses in the dark must be a real, genuine poet; he must have it in him: there is no use in denying it!"

The sagacious little banker added, "Only think! just consider! There are poems in Mr. Wordsworth's works, that I am not by any means sure I could have written myself, either in the daylight, or

in the evening, with two wax candles before me; but to have written them in the dark! 'There can be no mistake about him; we know very well what he is!"

We may be permitted to smile at the nightly cogitations of a poet, and at his solicitude to note them down in his bed; yet if a permanent condition of bodily blindness, as in the case of our own Milton, and of Homer, and other blind poets and prophets of antiquity, sharpened the mental vision, a temporary blindness, caused by the shades of night, may possibly impart a like acuteness, and night thoughts may really be the most poetical and the most precious. At midnight, and during the early watches of the morning, may be most rife and ripe the light and slight fictions, which poets and other writers of fables spin and weave out of themselves, like spiders.

I have often regretted, that my numerous letters have not been preserved; they described graphically events, the memory of which it is now considered desirable to recall.—I have lately received a scrap of a letter; I have forgotten to whom it was addressed; it was written many years after the period to which it refers, but it paints most correctly a certain sprightly bird, to whom we may surely say with Wordsworth,—

"For thy song, lark,
Is strong, lark,
Like a mountain river!"

CHAPTER XII.

May 29, 1841.

At the end of March, 1813, Shelley and Harriet came from Killarney in great haste, leaving Miss Westbrook there, with a large library, but without money, that there might be no temptations to discontinue her studies.

They remained a few days at a hotel in Dover Street, and then Harriet took lodgings in Half-Moon Street, accounting the situation fashionable; they staid there several months, and then went to Pimlico to be near the B.'s, which was esteemed very desirable; and there, I think, Ianthe was born. In August following Shelley came of age.

There was a little projecting window in Half-Moon Street, in which Shelley might be seen from the street all day long, book in hand, with lively gestures and bright eyes; so that Mrs. N. said, he wanted only a pan of clear water and a fresh turf to look like some young lady's lark, hanging outside for air and song.

There were vivacious ladies even in those very remote periods, and so it happens that the human race has been continued to our days.

T. J. H.

COOKE'S HOTEL, *Wednesday morn* (*June*, 1813).

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

Harriet writes in this. I only desire that I were always as anxious to confer on you all possible happiness, as she is. She tells you, that she invites you this evening. It will be better than our lonesome and melancholy interviews.

Your very affectionate,

P. B. SHELLEY.

I am very sure that Harriet will be as kind as ever. I could see, when I spoke to her (if my eyes were not blinded by love), that it was an error, not of the feelings, but of reason. I entreat you to come this evening. I send this by the servant, that there may be no delay.

To T. J. H.

COOKE'S HOTEL, *Friday* (*July*, 1813).

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Medwin, the attorney of Horsham, stayed so late on the night of my promised visit, that I could not come. Last night your short note arrived, also beyond its hour, and the N.'s had already taken me with them. This night the N.'s have a party to

Vauxhall; if you will call here at *nine* o'clock we will go together.

What can your notes mean; how suspicious you have become. I will not insert *one but.* Leonora has arrived. Medwin dines with me. Harriet is quite well, and her infant better.

Your affectionate friend,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

Vauxhall, as it existed in 1813, was a pleasant resort enough, two or three times in a season, provided always that there was the fullest assurance of a fine evening. It was quite peculiar, unique, the only thing of the kind. For those who loved to witness a stirring scene, there were motion and gaiety, and an ample occasion of being merry by deputy. If quiet was sought, it might be found in a walk under the fine old elms; there were retired alleys, where it might be strolled peacefully for hours without interruption. The effect of the illumination, of the numerous lamps under the trees, was striking and pleasing; the countless twinkling little stars fed by humble oil, surprised eyes not yet pampered and spoiled by the superior brilliancy of gas lights. The music was sprightly and inspiring, of a coarse and homely description, but sufficient for the place and purpose, and for the tunes which were played

there, and being heard at a distance, was not disagreeable to one predisposed to be amused. It was sweet to witness dancing, which the dancers evidently enjoyed so much, and to see suppers, of which the cockney and country wassailer partook with so conspicuous a relish. Arrack punch was the nectar of these celestial banquets; a generous liquor. I never drank it at Vauxhall, but at private convivial meetings I have found it a delightful beverage; in moderation harmless, beneficial indeed; a drink worthy of heroes, if not of Gods. In these Elysian shades the consumption of arrack must have been prodigious; waiters were running about all the evening in every direction with smoking bowls; the fragrant fumes filled the air, cheering the brain and strengthening the chest. I was bidden to assist at such a festival as that palace of pleasure, although of long standing and far spread renown, never celebrated before or since. It was to be a triumph of female artifice, the most proud, complete, and splendid victory of management and diplomacy that was ever achieved; the master-piece, nay, more, the mistress-piece, of consummate guile. Not only Shelley, poet, philosopher, ascetic, hermit, stoic, Spartan, and what not, was to be gulled, to be entrapped and conveyed thither, unconscious of his doom, unsuspecting; but an innocent young quakeress was also to be beguiled. She was to be lured into a

carriage under false pretences, driven in the shades of evening with fraud and covin over Westminster Bridge, she knew not whither, and surreptitiously introduced into the gardens of Comus and Circe, into Vanity Fair, the abodes of sin and shame. Our paschal lamb, our sacrifice without spot, was neither to know whither she was going, nor where she was, nor where she had been.

We conspirators were straitly charged and commanded not to tell her; to give in answer an unvarying "I do not know" to her inquiries as to what it was, what it all meant. We promised obedience. Shelley saw the snare; how he discovered the intrigue, I did not learn; most probably from his communications with the children; they were his intimates and confidants, and from children a secret speedily leaks out. However, he submitted meekly to his fate; and, like a great and good man, as he was, he determined patiently and cheerfully to fulfil his destinies. He invited me, indeed, in all simplicity to an entertainment, for which I had long been engaged; to confess the truth, I was deeply immersed and implicated in the guilt of that evening. I think he gave in to the project with less difficulty because he was aware of the deceit that was to be played upon the discreet Rachel.

I was introduced to the comely and placid offering, and she was placed under my immediate care. She

made no resistance; so, without a struggle, she was quickly and quietly launched into the worldling's paradise. She admired the long vista of lamps; she admired all she saw, and with more warmth and animation than one could have anticipated. She asked me repeatedly what it was. "I am not at liberty to tell you." She repeated the inquiry many times, and pressed me to inform her. I was faithful to my promise, to the solemn league and covenant.

"Is it not Vauxhall?"

"I am not to tell you; you are never to know."

"Is it so wrong, then? It is so delightful, it is a great pity it is so wrong!"

We walked about arm in arm; we went everywhere, saw everything, and the fair victim approved of all she saw: sometimes in articulate language, and with a strength of expression that surprised me, but more commonly with a quiet murmur of pleasure, cooing like a dove. Yet she was oppressed by a certain timidity; she kept her hand fast in my arm, often pressing closely against my side: my placid, sleek, well-fed mate imparted to me some of that genial warmth out of the copious stores of animal heat with which her portly person was so abundantly furnished. When she was more especially delighted with the novelty and entertainment of the evening, she whispered in my ear implor-

ingly, and with a pretty beseeching look, "Friend, thou wilt not remark, lest Friends should observe!" Those we met were commonly too much occupied with their own concerns to notice us; nevertheless, some persons viewed us with astonishment, staring hard at my companion and myself, for she was in full costume. How much soever Friends might observe on other topics, they could not cavil at her dress; that at least was perfectly unexceptionable and irreproachable. Bysshe, for his part, was very happy; entirely taken up, engrossed, captivated, by the charming lady through whose contrivance we had been brought to Vauxhall. A mere mundane critic might have declared that there was a most desperate flirtation between them; a more spiritualised observer, a poet and a philosopher like himself, would discern in their union a strong and close sympathy, and would describe and designate it as such.

The display of fireworks in those days was but a poor affair, yet the dark shade of the lofty trees gave a strong contrast and relief to the sparks, and flames, and fire. Shelley, as it will be readily believed, was passionately fond of fireworks. He often had a rocket, a Roman candle, a few squibs and Catherine wheels at hand, and he would tempt children, of the like juvenile tastes with himself, into the garden or field to let them off there. He had disappeared stealthily from the drawing-room; the

cracking and fizzing under the window, and the shouts and laughter of the enraptured children, explained the motive of his absence.

We had exhilarated and fortified ourselves with large potations of generous tea before we set out on our deceitful and treacherous mission, and we returned in good time to an abundant supper, which a long promenade in the cool night air made most acceptable.

I never met with my sleek, soft, murmuring mate again; her visit to London was short, her residence was in the country. She confided her history to me during our confidential walk; there was neither mystery nor romance in it. Rachel's father was a Quaker apothecary of the first magnitude in the west of England. "Friend, thou wilt not remark, lest Friends should observe!" These words were softly whispered in my ear a hundred times at least by the plump daughter of Ephraim Smooth, and they seem to be a formula which young Quakeresses use, when the engaging creatures are conscious that they are doing wrong.

I once spent some weeks at Christmastide in the country with an agreeable and accomplished family, and there I met a young Quaker lady. In her plain cap, plain kerchief, and plaited conundrums, by which the female Friends are distinguished from the rest of their sex, she was one of the loveliest

creatures I ever beheld; a being of exquisite and sought out beauty. Hannah was passionately fond of chess, and I had the happiness to play with her for hours; she frequently murmured with languid delight, and when the game became peculiarly interesting, she would softly whisper, sometimes almost inaudibly, "Friend, thou wilt not remark, lest Friends should observe!"

That strict religionists, strict moralists even, should forbid cards and games of hazard, is not unreasonable; but nobody ever plays at chess for money; it is purely a contest of skill, chance has no share in the event; what, then, can there be reprehensible in it? What is there in the noble game of Kings for Friends to observe upon? Do the prim observers quarrel with the royal, aristocratic, martial titles of the pieces? Well, then, let the castles be called windmills; the knights, mounted millers, sitting on horseback above sacks of wheat; let the king be a substantial corn-factor, and the queen his wife; let the bishops be a couple of master bakers from Scotland, thorough rogues in grain; so that the designations of the several pieces may sound, not in nobility, but in knavery. The pawns might represent the society of Friends, and being of sober uniform colours, and unassuming mien, might well stand for ordinary Quakers.

But what could the contest be? It must not be

a battle, or litigation, both war and law being strictly forbidden; the struggle might be for one side to overreach the other in exchanges, to drive the harder bargain, to compel the opponent's king—corn-factor, I should say—to commit an act of bankruptcy, and being unable to avoid, answer, or cover a cheque, to be mated. One of the contending firms might be drab, the other slate-coloured, black and white being decidedly too pronounced.

Under such harmless conditions, the amiable members of the Society of Friends might safely engage in friendly struggles upon the sixty-four squares of the board of Grinders, not of Kings, with peace to Penn's ashes.

It is possible that Bysshe was amused at the idea of the hoax that was to be played upon the sweetly placid Rachel, and entered willingly into the scheme of mischief, but he took no concern in the execution, or in the event. He had an antipathy, a rooted aversion, an utter abhorrence of everything low and vulgar, and there is nothing so vulgar as dissent, as the preposterous impertinence of a Dissenter, who is always to be laughed at, and heartily, but never to be persecuted. I called one morning—it was on a Sunday, I think—at the house of a common friend, to meet Bysshe, by appointment, for some expedition or other; he did not attend, as was too frequently the case with him; no human being,

no poet was ever less punctual: he had no perception, no notion of time; a divine nature lives not in time, but in eternity. Although I did not meet him on that occasion, I saw a personage of some distinction, for Madame D'Arblay called. She expected to find, or professed to have expected to have found, her very dear friend, Madame de B.; of course she would have been ravished by her presence, she was desolated at her absence.

The favoured novelist had just returned from France, to which country few English went in those days, and from which still fewer returned. Her conversation, therefore, would have been very interesting if she had told us anything to the purpose; but she did not, and it was not so. She returned from an unsuccessful chase after her husband.

Whenever a Frenchman marries an Englishwoman, for some six years or so, he makes her a most exemplary husband; and then, all at once, he plants her; plants her at once and for ever. Thus had the Chevalier served the gifted authoress of 'Evelina' and 'Cecilia.' He, a singularly handsome man, as it was affirmed, for the accustomed period had been a good, almost too good a husband,—too good, certainly, to last,—and then suddenly he withdrew himself; withdrew himself, entirely against his inclination, but under the iron influence of some painful, irresistible, and indescribable necessity, as

his frequent and very affectionate letters abundantly testified, with often-repeated assurances, that he should never know a moment's peace of mind until his return at some remote and indefinite period.

The efforts of the most eloquent pen had failed to recall the General, or even to obtain any specific limitation of the probable duration of the term of his absence and anguish.

The forsaken wife at last determined to go in quest of him herself, and to terminate his sufferings by bringing the fugitive back to happiness. With infinite difficulty and after long delays, and by moving heaven and earth, she had obtained a passport and permission to land in France. She gave us the details at great length. She procured, with some trouble, an open boat, and set out with her maid-servant.

They reached the French coast, at what point I have forgotten; as they neared the land the soldiers on the beach made signs to the boat to retire; and as it still approached the shore, they fired their muskets, and the balls were heard whizzing over their heads. The boatmen resolved to return, Madame was determined to remain; after some disputes the mistress and her maid were lifted out of the boat and set down, up to the middle in the water, with their portmanteaus on their heads.

When the soldiers perceived that the formidable boat was retreating, they ceased to fire, but they took no notice of the poor women, who remained in the sea, the tide rising gradually until it reached their chins. Just in time however to save them from drowning, a boat came to them from the beach, and they were landed thoroughly wet, but unhurt.

Profound as the Chevalier's affliction was, it had left no traces behind; every inquiry was vain, every research fruitless; no tidings could be heard of the disconsolate husband. It was inconceivable, but it was true, that he still persevered in withdrawing himself from his beloved wife, and from the young pledge of their affections: the General did not choose to redeem the pledge.

All the affecting and romantic incidents of the unavailing pursuit were related with a copious stream of conjugal eloquence in a discourse that threatened to be interminable. The effect of this celebrated lady's conversation, like her written narratives, was often to inspire astonishment, but certainly not always implicit belief. The feelings of the wife finally gave place to those of the daughter. We had never seen her father; we had never heard him play on the organ: we had lived therefore in vain.

It was arranged, that the reproach should be

removed forthwith by meeting Evelina on a Sunday afternoon in the chapel at Chelsea Hospital. The appointment was duly kept; we attended the evening service, heard a heavy voluntary, and some other performances, some of them being very loud, probably to display the power of the instrument; and we were afterwards presented to the author of the History of Music. It was adjudged and decreed that Bysshe should go with us; he would be delighted, some said. However he took the liberty of judging for himself; he thought otherwise; and of acting for himself also; he was terrified at the bare proposal of listening to such heavenly strains and intellectual conversation; he eloigned himself, and evaded pursuit as effectually as if he had been a goat, or even General D'Arblay himself. Something being said about the music of the ancients, the organist assured us that it had no merit whatever.

Some Greek tunes had been found in an old MS. of Pindar; these proved to be altogether intolerable; notwithstanding he had not only transposed the ancient notation into the modern form, but had also entirely re-arranged them himself. The Doctor's hearers were somewhat bigotted in their favourite opinion of the eminent perfection of Grecian art; on our way home we ventured to conjecture, that possibly the re-arrangement had some share in

making the antique melodies distasteful to modern ears. It was observed, that if the Iliad of Homer, having been long lost, had been lately found by the immortal Doctor, and he had not only made the poem public, but had taken the trouble to rewrite it himself from beginning to end, it might be doubted, whether the Iliad would have been admired as much in the improved recension, as it has been in the unformed state, in which the world has always possessed it. It was regretted by some of our party needlessly, I thought, that Shelley had missed the opportunity of seeing the famous Madame D'Arblay and of being seen by her. And it was plotted to bring them together; but the plot, I believe, did not succeed; and it was quite as well that it did not. They were not suited for each other; whatever merit Miss Burney had, and no doubt she possessed much, was not to his taste. The daughter of a music-master, who got his bread by giving lessons at Court and to the children of the aristocracy, who had been herself a sort of handmaid to the queen, an unworthy and unpleasant employment, according to her own account of the matter, could be neither more nor less than what she in fact was, a bundle of conventionalities; and these, however clever and well arranged, would not have proved attractive to the Divine Poet. Her conversation was not without ability, but it was wholly about herself, and the self

not being at all interesting, the conversation could not be so.

"The New Zealander must have had a good appetite who wanted to eat you, Burney!" said Charles Lamb.

This remark was not much less applicable to the other members of that distinguished family whom I have seen, than it was to the gallant admiral to whom it was addressed; by whose misplaced confidence and misplaced obstinacy, as we read in the account of Cooke's first voyage, sixteen men out of a boat's crew of thirty and upwards, commanded by Lieutenant Burney, were captured, roasted and devoured.

Nurses say to their young charges, "I could eat you up! I love you so much, I could eat you all up!"

I cannot think that the author of Queen Mab would have wished to eat the author of Cecilia, however nicely roasted and done brown.

It has been said by critics who reasoned from false analogies, and were not acquainted with Shelley, "that it was in him to have walked towards the French Revolution over seas of blood." For my part, and I knew him well, I am convinced that it was not. We cannot be quite sure, it is true, how any man would have acted in a particular case, unless he had been tried; but severe measures, persecution,

and the shedding of blood, were contrary to his gentle nature. Besides, he was entirely without self-conceit; he had nothing of the hard, arrogant self-conceit of Citizen Brissot and his fellows; he was never a doctrinaire. His course was discussion, not doctrine, not dogmatism, not the stern dogmatism of an iron despotism.

The French revolutionists were eminently and conspicuously dogmatical; they could not bear contradiction. Shelley delighted in it. To contradict him flatly, and to dispute with him, endeared the disputant to him. He never proposed to form a code, he never would have accomplished, he never would have attempted it; he would never have got beyond the project of a code; interminable, endless discussion respecting a future code. He never would have set a going the guillotine, as has been inconsiderately affirmed, or kept it going; with him it was all doubt, disputation, discussion: his theories were unformed, incomplete, and especially unpractical. Socrates, as he is delineated by Plato, and whose boast it was that he knew nothing, was his prototype; we cannot conceive Socrates, under any circumstances, playing the part of Danton, or of Robespierre, and sending victims to the scaffold.

I often attempted myself, as others did, to make Shelley acquainted with such of my friends, as I thought might be useful or agreeable to him;

from whose society he might have derived amusement or instruction; but the attempt was hardly ever successful. I have sometimes endeavoured to gratify those, who were desirous, naturally and laudably desirous, to cultivate the acquaintance of so remarkable a person, by introducing him to them, by taking him to their houses, or by inviting them to meet him; but my efforts were almost always abortive; these schemes ended in vexation and disappointment. On these occasions only have I been very angry with him; that he should annoy myself alone by his irregularity I could readily pardon, I was accustomed to it; it was our ordinary course of business; but it was difficult to be equally patient, when he compromised me with others.

People would get up a dinner party, or other entertainment, purely and solely on his account; others would remain in town for days, for a week or two, even; or would come from a distance to some point, where he had promised to be found, for the sake of meeting him; and when they discovered, that this trouble had been taken in vain, and so many inconveniences endured, without gaining the much-desired result, they were vexed and offended, especially the ladies, who ill brook disappointment in any matter upon which their hearts are set. I was the more disconcerted in

such cases, because I was conscious that I had most reason to be angry with myself, and with my own folly and credulity in trusting that which was by no means to be trusted. And to be angry and to expostulate on account of such failure and breach of promise, was to chide a waterfall; to inveigh against the wind, the sea, fire.

It is necessary in this life to pay a price exactly, fully equal to every advantage received by us; the advantage of the society of my incomparable friend was great, immense; but it is not to be denied that the price was heavy; and it was rigorously demanded, and punctually paid in full. He took strange caprices, unfounded frights and dislikes, vain apprehensions and panic terrors, and therefore he absented himself from formal and sacred engagements. He was unconscious and oblivious of times, places, persons and seasons; and falling into some poetic vision, some day-dream, he quickly and completely forgot all that he had repeatedly and solemnly promised; or he ran away after some object of imaginary urgency and importance, which suddenly came into his head, setting off in vain pursuit of it, he knew not whither. When he was caught, brought up in custody, and turned over to the ladies, with, Behold your King! to be caressed, courted, admired and flattered, the king of beauty and fancy would too commonly bolt; slip away,

steal out, creep off; unobserved and almost magically he vanished; thus mysteriously depriving his fair subjects of his much coveted, long looked for company:—

> "Making it momentary, as a sound;
> Swift, as a shadow; short, as any dream;
> Brief, as the lightning."

CHAPTER XIII.

At a late hour, when the assembly was breaking up, and some guests even had gone home, it has happened, although rarely, that he was again in the midst of us; the poor fellow, looking amazed and terrified, as if he had just come from Heaven, and had there heard God's angels singing before the throne. His flight from society was usually surreptitious and stealthy, but I have observed him to start up hastily, to declare publicly that his presence was imperatively required elsewhere on matters of moment; and to retreat with as much noise and circumstance as an army breaking up its camp.

We used to meet in our circles some foreign society, especially many French emigrants. I had seen something of these exiles before, and so had Bysshe. His aunt, that is to say, the wife of his father's half-brother, John Shelley, showed much hospitality to the emigrant nobility, and filled the house at Penshurst with disagreeable and unprofitable guests. He spoke with distaste of his visits to

Penshurst, except that he greatly admired the place itself, and warmly lauded it. The emigrants, with very few exceptions, seemed to be just the people to be sent out of a country with advantage, but not by any means the people whom any sane man would recal or restore. Their chief characteristic was utter imbecility, rendered still more odious and imbecile by prodigious and exacting pretensions. Some of them doubtless were worthy men, but poor, feeble, helpless creatures; and many of their clergy were distinguished for a sincere and conspicuous piety, a merit above all human praise. These would go straight to Heaven with their martyred King, the child of St. Louis, and they would be quite at home there; it was precisely the place for them: but in this wicked world they were very much in the way.

'Shelley seldom observed peculiarities of dress, but there was amongst these unfortunates an old fellow, he was a French duke, I believe, whose costume was so extraordinary that even he noticed it, and laughed heartily at the strange disguise. My lord, the duke, was strongly possessed by Anglomania, which he continued to indulge, although he was paying so dearly for it in purse and in person, and for his countrymen's love of constitutional freedom. He was particularly ambitious to dress exactly like an Englishman, so that he might be taken for one, and

after divers failures, he succeeded at last completely. This was his type; the purely English, or Anglomaniacal, habit was this. His coat was of cloth, of that kind of grey called pepper and salt, very light, indeed, much salt, with very little pepper. The waistcoat was of pepper and salt also, but darker, with more pepper. His shorts were of a like material, the pepper predominating, and therefore being darker than the waistcoat; and his long gaiters were still darker, the darkest of all, being almost entirely pepper, with scarcely any salt.

We were ushered one morning into a room, where this figure of fun was sitting alone. After sundry profound reverences and an exhortation not to despair, for our friends, he was assured and could assure us, would soon appear, he gravely asked me, if he did not look exactly like an Englishman? If I could possibly suspect that he was a foreigner, a Frenchman? "My lord, the duke, does us a very great honour in desiring so much to resemble us, and so closely!" My answer was accepted by the Anglomaniac as altogether satisfactory; but Bysshe broke forth into a shrieking peal of laughter, and rushed headlong out of the room.

"Is your friend taken ill, sir?"

"He is afflicted with a spasmodic cough."

"Poor fellow! Poor young man!"

And the good-natured, unsuspecting peer seriously

recommended that Eau de Luce should be frequently rubbed on his chest by a soft, warm hand.

"Eau de Luce is easily procured, but where will he find the soft, warm hand?"

"Oh! with his truly charming physiognomy, he will very easily find that!"

I repeated the gracious and graceful compliment to the culprit with the deserved warning:

"If you laugh at the poor old fellow's fashionable English suit again, you will be an ingrate, a thorough wretch! I will not shelter you any more. You shall repair his wounded honour; you shall meet him in Hyde Park, and empty your quarrel with the single rapier!"

The unexpected, vehement, and irrepressible bursts of laughter were often distressing, and, indeed, perilous.

I found Shelley one day in Chancery Lane, standing in the middle of the street in front of the gateway of Lincoln's Inn, and staring about him, as if some Genie had just set him down in the middle of an unknown city. I took his arm, and led him into the common dining-hall of Lincoln's Inn. The first and ancient Vice-Chancellor, Sir Thomas Plumer, was sitting on the bench, looking, as usual, exceedingly freckled, red-haired, hircose, and sordid. Half-a-dozen attorneys were seated with their backs to him in listless apathy, occasionally putting forth

a leg by way of a change, and looking at the shoe, as if they had never seen one before, and yawning in immense oscitancy. Three or four dullards, the duller portion of a dull bar who practised in his court, were addressing his honour in turns, or squabbling altogether at once. Presently one of them said, with a certain deadly liveliness, as if he were uttering something new: "I am very sure your Honour will not open a door; for if your Honour were once to open a door, the door being open, as your Honour very well knows——" And thereupon, not without a certain resolute warmth, the Court interposed: "Sir, you are perfectly right; of one thing at least I am quite clear; I am determined I will never open a door!" This was too much: with a sharp shriek of fiendish laughter, Bysshe darted wildly out of the hall. To do him justice, Sir Thomas was a good-natured man: he looked compassionately towards the flying, mirth-stricken deer, and seemed to say to himself: "Poor fellow! He has been taken ill; it is some fit! But I will never open a door for all that: I am quite determined." And he continued to prose and to prate on in confirmation of his fixed determination. I stole out quietly in the midst of the old draughtsman's tautology and endless repetitions, spun-yarns of foxy, picked-oakum eloquence, and joined the fugitive. I found him musing before the door of

the hall: he said to me very seriously: "How strange it is, one wanders over half the world, comes back again, and always finds the same people in the same places saying the selfsame things; and saying a thousand times things not worth saying once!"

"If all the world
Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse."

Shelley fed much on pulse at different periods, and for a long time together, but never in a pet; on the contrary, through a calm, deliberate choice, and a sincere conviction of the propriety and superior salubrity of such food. His letters inform us, that he had occasionally restricted himself in great measure, if not entirely, to a vegetable diet. What first suggested to him the abstinence from flesh does not anywhere appear; whether his own feelings and reflections, or the advice of others given orally, or in books. It was not until the spring of the year 1813 that he entered upon a full and exact course of vegetable diet. His Pythagorean, or Brahminical, existence, and his intimate association with the amiable and accomplished votaries of a Return to Nature, was perhaps the prettiest and most pleasing portion of his poetical, philosophical, and lovely life. His nutriment had ever been, and always was, simple; consisting, as has been already mentioned,

principally of bread eaten by itself, or with some very slight and frugal condiment. Spirituous liquors he never tasted; beer, rarely. He never called for, purchased, or drew, wine for his own drinking; but if it came in his way, and the company was not disagreeable to him, he would sit at table a while after dinner, and take two or three glasses of any white wine, uniformly selecting the weakest. I will not be hard upon him, and say that he absolutely disliked port wine—what Oxford man ever did?—but he had unpleasant associations with it. The sight of port wine reminded him of his father, who loved it dearly, and drank it freely; not to any reprehensible excess, but as a country gentleman and a justice of the peace ought to drink it.

I have often thought, and I have now and then even hinted, that if he could only bring himself to drink a bottle of choice port with his father, to sit sociably with him for an hour or two, and patiently to hear the old squire extol his wine and himself, they would get on much better together, and many serious difficulties and inconveniences would be avoided. But it was all in vain; my efforts as a peace-maker were thrown away. The alliance was impracticable—impossible. It may be very well to pour oil and wine into wounds, they may heal; but it is useless to stir the two liquors together, they will never mix.

Poor Bysshe was doomed to encounter many of those sèvere trials which wring the heart and wring it so hard. As the happiest period of his life was that spent at Oxford, so also was it the jolliest. He partook of the Oxonian potation, negus, with a real relish, and drank it freely, like a true and studious Academic, as he was.

After reading for many hours, and walking for many hours, during the livelong day, indeed, the peripatetic student could not but enjoy his supper; and after supper—for the Genius of the place would admit of no denial, or excuse—two tumblers of hot negus, each containing two full glasses of sherry, followed quietly and in order, as the silent planets pursue their nightly courses. He did this then, did it freely, and thought no evil—in mental blindness. Afterwards, his eyes were opened. For I have reminded him of it; proposing, once in a way, a recurrence to old habits. But the child of light wondered how he could have been guilty of such a piece of odious and disgusting sensuality, sometimes adding, "I ought to have been shot for it!"

Sobriety was the exception, not the rule, at our very learned and most orthodox University. The college servants at Oxford were good, but muzzy, as the best servants often are, with an abiding and perennial muzziness, being constantly inspired with the soft inspiration of strong, sound ale, which

flowed copiously from the buttery. When the ascetic young poet returned to Nature, alcohol in every shape—even in the subdued shape of negus—was strictly prohibited.

If his diet, fluid and solid, was cool, not less cool was his dress. I never remember to have seen Bysshe in a great coat or cloak, even in the coldest weather. He wore his waistcoat much or entirely open; sometimes there was an ellipsis of his waistcoat; it was not expressed, but understood. Unless he was compelled to cover it by main force, he had his throat bare; the neckcloth being cast aside, lost, over the hills and far away, and the collar of his shirt unbuttoned. In the street or road he reluctantly wore a hat, but in fields and gardens his little round head had no other covering than his long, wild, ragged locks.

The poor, imaginative, creative head was plunged several times a-day into a basonful of cold water, which he invariably filled brimful, in order to throw as much water as possible on his feet and the floor. That the dripping locks might dry, he thrust, ever and anon, the fingers of both hands through them, and set them on end—

"With hair upstaring then, like reeds, not hair."

However, the abstinence from wraps, from great-coats and cloaks, was a characteristic of the age as

well as of the individual. In the last of his notes on "Queen Mab," as a commentary on the lines—

> "No longer now
> He slays the lamb, that looks him in the face,
> And horribly devours his mangled flesh,"

the author has set forth his views on the subject of vegetable diet; it would be presumptuous, therefore, for another to discuss it; if it were not so indeed, most assuredly I am altogether inadequate to the task; and it is needless to reprint here what is in the hands of every reader. My impression is, that the matter contained in this long note was published originally in a separate, independent form. Whether I ever received a copy of the little work, if there was any such work, I do not remember; it is certain that I cannot lay my hand upon it at present. For some months, for some years, I was in the thick of it, for I lived much with a select and most estimable society of persons, who had returned to nature, and of course I heard much discussion on the topic of vegetable diet. I never presumed to take a part myself in their arguments, for two reasons: first, because I heard quite enough of the matter, to say the least, without entering into the controversy; secondly, and principally, because I did not understand it, and was not qualified to arrive at a sound conclusion. That

some persons may be competent to determine the question, I do not deny; I will only affirm, that I never was so fortunate as to fall in with even one of them. I did more than discuss, I conformed; not through faith, but for good fellowship, and because it was an agreeable experiment, if that can be called an experiment by which nothing is to be tried or discovered; perhaps I should rather say, that it was an agreeable change. Solomon says, and he says wisely: "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith." My kind friends asserted, and they were wise in their generation,—whether also in their choice of diet, I cannot decide,—that a dinner of herbs, a vegetable dinner, is better than roast beef and love and friendship therewith. Certainly their vegetable dinners were delightful; elegant and excellent repasts; looking only to the table and the viands placed upon it, and not to those who sat round it

"In solemn troops and sweet societies."

Flesh, fowl, fish, game, never appeared; nor eggs bodily in their individual capacity, nor butter in the gross: the two latter articles were admitted into cookery, it is true, but as sparingly as possible, and their presence was provisional, interlocutory, under protest, as culinary aids not approved of,

and soon to be dispensed with. The injunction extended to shell-fish. John Horne Tooke proposed shrimps and treacle to one of the fathers of the church vegetant here on earth; the treacle might have been accepted, but every individual shrimp would have been black-balled. We had soups in great variety, that seemed the more delicate from the absence of meat. There were vegetables of every kind, the finest and best of the kind, dressed with care and skill; either plainly or stewed, and otherwise artfully and scientifically arranged and disguised. Puddings, tarts, confections, sweets, abounded. Cheese was under the ban,—anathematized, excommunicate. Milk and cream might not be taken unreservedly; however, they were allowed to form ingredients in puddings, and to be poured sparingly into tea, as an indulgence to the weakness of neophytes, tender plants. Fruits of every description were welcomed,—hailed rapturously, received with plaudits, as if the goddess, Nature, herself stood bodily before her votaries. We luxuriated, ran riot in tea and coffee, and sought variety occasionally in cocoa and chocolate. Bread and butter and buttered toast were eschewed; but bread-cakes, plain seed-cakes, were liberally divided amongst the faithful.

An epicure, fond of variety, would do well to adopt vegetable diet, now and then, for a day or two,

as a change, for the mere gratification; as 'a piece of odious and disgusting sensuality.' It ought not to be concealed, that to be agreeable, at least to a person of refined habits, vegetable fare must be good; consisting of the best materials after their kind, perfectly well prepared. Otherwise it degenerates into fasting and mortification. This species of self-denial, these ascetic restraints, may have their use in a spiritual aspect, and for the soul's health, but that is altogether a different consideration, and not at all to the present purpose. The country is better suited to the practice of the bloodless regimen than a city. A well-stocked garden, furnishing fresh vegetables in profusion, an orchard yielding ripe fruit in unlimited abundance, for present consumption, and for the winter's store, will feed luxuriously a hundred Pythagoreans. The climate of the South would be propitious, and its varied produce. Naples, as it struck me most forcibly, being present there, the fertile and fair island of Sicily doubtless,—in a word, the lovely kingdom of the two Sicilies,—would be the true Eden, the earthly Paradise, the very home for the penitent prodigal son, who had grace enough to return to his all-bountiful mother. On the shores of the Mediterranean flesh is not tempting, the fish is seldom inviting to a Northern palate, but the pleasant regions are most rich in inanimate aliments. Maca-

roni and the other pastes of Italy were valuable helps. Onions, variously concocted, and rendered as mild and innocuous as the dogmas of Pythagoras, were the staple seasoning; and mushrooms and their cryptogamous congèners, were zests of inestimable value. The vegetable table is not economical, at least in London, even after making a liberal deduction for the absence of all fermented liquors, if it be spread in a comfortable and satisfactory style. In the country, probably, it is otherwise. In Italy, at Croton, where Pythagoras lived and taught, it is certain that his discipline was not less exemplary and commendable for thrift, than for humanity and temperance.

In all opinions, in every sect, there is uniformly an extreme party, and so was it with the votaries of vegetable diet. Some held that the effect of fire on aliment was to render it insalubrious. Man should live, they told us, on raw vegetable substances: on salads, apples, peas, beans, and cauliflowers, uncooked; on raw meal, raw carrots, turnips, and potatoes. They rejected the discovery, or the theft, of Prometheus, banishing fire from their kitchens. Every church has its miracles: I was credibly informed that the patriarch, who was very far in advance of his age, once actually eat a raw potato. I never heard that he eat a second; and the Rationalists indeed affirm, that he only talked of eating the first. There are, moreover,

contrarieties and contradictions in all schools of philosophers, and not the fewest, or the least startling, are apparent amongst the champions of the extreme party. According to the advocates of absolute, universal crudity, nothing was to be cooked, except that which does not require cookery—water. Water was to be distilled, to be subjected to the violent action of otherwise forbidden fire, which rendered it disagreeable, odious. Water thus prepared had a disgusting taste; it was gravely pronounced to be only an empyreuma, but it was not more palatable after this hard name had emanated from authority. The Magi, the water kings, found, or fancied they had found, after a clumsy and tedious analysis, a small bit of lead in the water, which was derived, they said, from the leaden pipes, in which water, to our utter destruction, was conveyed. I saw the trophy, for it was exhibited in triumph. To eyes only partially unsophisticated, it looked like a single pellet of dust-shot: if it had been sent forth as a missile, it might have proved formidable to a fly, but would not have knocked a wren off her perch; yet was it to kill and murder half London. Nay, more: the presence of arsenic had been detected in the most limpid spring water; half a grain of the metal in several tons of water. Arsenic, we are taught, may be found, although in infinitely small quantities, in almost all substances. In minute,

infinitesimal doses, it is not poisonous, not injurious, we are assured, but salutary. One Sunday morning, we actually assisted at an arsenic hunt: we dropped in upon the patriarch who, ever zealous in the good cause, had extemporised a laboratory in his parlour. He was certainly by no means bloodthirsty, but a mild and most merciful man,—the best of men; nevertheless, he had made himself look like a tiger; he had given himself the aspect of a royal Bengal tiger. He was dressed in a suit of black, of rusty black: coat, waistcoat, shorts and gaiters, were all of cloth, which, in the good old times, had been black. He was busy which his alembics, in hot pursuit of arsenic, luting his retorts with pipe clay; and he had been wiping the clay off his fingers, from time to time, all the morning, not with a towel, but by drawing his hands across his clothes; so that when we entered the study of the alchemist, he was barred and brindled all over with white stripes, on a dark ground. He had completely satisfied himself, he said, of the insalubrity and deleteriousness of water undistilled, and he undertook to convince us of the correctness of his conclusions, but chiefly, I must say, by nods and winks, and mysterious signs. So awkward and credulous a chemist, by experiments so clumsily conducted, and with so imperfect an apparatus, ought surely to be able to find anything in anything.

I heard of small parties vegetating in the country, dotted about here and there, who had adopted the vegetable diet, and were steadily pursuing it; and I even met with some specimens of them. They were good, simple people enough, I dare say, but of no talents, note, or mark; for the most part Dissenters, I believe, and far gone in Dissent, and consequently ready and ripe for any crotchets.

Joe Ritson was before my time, I think; certainly I never fell in with him. He had some business as a conveyancer, some reputation as an antiquary; but as a feeder on vegetable substances, he put forward his theories with such vehemence and wild extravagance, as to be stigmatised, perhaps unjustly, as a wretched maniac. He called sheep, oxen, and pigs "our fellow creatures," as undeniably they are in a certain sense; and he inferred from that appellation, that we ought not to eat their flesh, or put them to death. A flea, a bug, a louse, or a tapeworm, is also a fellow creature; and what then? So likewise is a cabbage: Horace speaks of slaying a leek and an onion.

So long as I observed the vegetable rule myself, I observed it very exactly, according to the canons which I had received from the doctors of the gentle, tolerant, bloodless church, because my mind was naturally disposed for precision and strictness. But Shelley was a creature of impulses; so long as

he was in company with the authorities, his practice was unexceptionable; but not so, it is to be feared, when he was left to himself to pursue unimpeded his own erratic course. He could follow no other laws than the golden law of doing instantly whatever the inclination of the moment prompted. I have heard that during the period when he was pointed out as an exemplary Pythagorean, he was one day found in the lake district, where he had been wandering alone on foot, in a very small room at a very small inn, with a very small circular table before him, and upon this was an enormous round of cold boiled beef, from which the famished philosopher was helping himself freely, as if it had been a brown loaf, or a piece of canonical seed-cake. At this deflection from the path of rectitude, nobody who knew him could be surprised; but I confess I was somewhat astonished at the aberration of another high authority, a defender of the faith, which I myself witnessed. After a long walk one Sunday in the summer, we called upon our friend to take tea with him, which we had promised to do, for his family was absent, and he was left quite alone: it would be an act of charity. When we arrived he was still at table; by some casualty the hour of dinner had been postponed. We were shown into the dining-room; he was not a little disconcerted, and not without reason. There was a

sufficient supply of vegetables on the board, no doubt, but there was also a fine roast fillet of veal, and upon this he was experimentalising with a carving-knife and fork. For some moments he sat mute; when he had recovered a little, he said:—

"My servants are carnivorous, they are cannibals; this meat is for them; but I had it brought up just to look at it, to see how they are treated, poor things!"

"But you have been eating it!" Bysshe exclaimed, with as much horror as if it had been the body of Pelops.

"Why, as it was here, I thought there could be no great harm whatever in just tasting the stuffing. Veal stuffing, you know, is merely bread and herbs and spices, and other little matters chopped up together."

He had tasted the stuffing, evidently, and in cutting it his knife must have slipped, or he had not nicely discriminated between the stuffing and the meat.

There was another remarkable instance of transgression; it was at head-quarters. I did not see it, but I heard of it; we all heard of it, and it made the ears of the elect tingle. The wife of the patriarch, the primate of all vegetables, was brought to bed, most auspiciously of course; disease and death had no more dominion over her. The prescribed regi-

men during her confinement was cold pease-pudding with a slice of dry bread; and with this simple fare she was going on prosperously, charmingly. Mrs. A. called to see her friend, as soon as one lady may call upon another in such a case, and was gratified with the pleasing aspect of such a rapid recovery. It was most important to mothers; a rule had been obtained to show cause, why the curse of Eve should not be set aside. It was time to dine, under the salubrious system of antiphlogistic diet punctuality was essential. With a surgeon's wife there is no need of apologies, and all ceremony in a sick-room is quite out of place. Dinner was served. The lady in the straw eat a mouthful or two of the cold pease-pudding, and crumbled the bread to the wonder and edification of her visitor. The latter took her leave, and on her way down-stairs she met something not less wonderful, but far less edifying, a plump roast fowl went smoking on, as it was being carried incautiously from the cold vegetable kitchen to the lady's bedroom. What news for Bedford Row! What a treat for Bedford Row! The blunt surgeon was no friend to vegetable diet; it was affirmed that he was even exceedingly hostile to its assertors and defenders. Consequently, as soon as the emperor and autocrat of all the blue pills heard of the mission of the roast fowl, and he heard of it very soon, the carnivorous malignant spread the glad tidings far

and wide. Medical people swarmed about the meek followers of vegetable diet, like wasps about a pot of honey; whether as spies to see the nakedness of the land, or to observe more nearly the regimen, that was to cure and to prevent all diseases.

To such as had adopted this mode of living with sanatory views, supposing it would benefit their health, that is to say to the greater number of the modern Pythagoreans, and were so credulous as to believe that the professors of the art of healing knew more of the matter, than those who know nothing whatever, they were welcome: they encouraged their advances, and cultivated their acquaintance. Consequently, I saw something at that period of medical society; I cannot say that, upon the whole, it was agreeable. Some of the therapeutics were tolerably good company, but not one of them, so far as I remember, was particularly pleasant. For the most part, they were mere prigs, living glossaries of hard words, conceited, intolerant, and dogmatical, to a ludicrous excess, on points which, at best, were extremely doubtful. They were given up helplessly and hopelessly to the last new whim of the day; ascribed and bound as serfs to some recent, new-fangled crotchet: half-taught or quarter-taught—sometimes considerably less than quarter-taught. Jealous, envious, illiberal, and quarrelsome; detracting from and backbiting each

other; and too frequently epicureans, obtruding and thrusting in men's faces a low, offensive, and shallow materialism. When these people are content steadily to follow the established praxis, they can cure some diseases and mitigate others; but if they begin to generalise, to write, or discourse, of the healthful in the abstract, they are sadly to seek. On that head all mankind are equally ignorant; unprofessional persons do not venture far, and therefore they do not expose themselves much; but adepts, as they esteem themselves, are bolder; they go far out to sea, out of sight of land, and are wrecked and drowned in the unfathomable ocean of error.

Sir Joseph Banks, discoursing about the propriety and expediency of excluding medical applicants, as far as it was practicable, from the Royal Society, said: "Their love of science is commonly all stuff and sham. The privilege of placing three letters of the alphabet after the name is considered of importance, and is only sought as a puff and advertisement. It is but newly gilding the pestle and mortar over the door of the shop, in order to attract customers." This rule, as it was laid down by the president—a golden rule, it should seem—has been pretty steadily adhered to, I have heard; whereat these very crusty folks are often in high dudgeon, and sometimes explode in a very diverting manner.

In law, physic, and divinity, it is universally acknowledged that extensive, sweeping, and fundamental changes are equally required, and can no longer be refused; but of no profession will the members ever reform themselves; amendments must always come from without:

> "By foreign hands those dying eyes were closed,
> By foreign hands those decent limbs composed."

If any eyes are to be closed, any shops of injustice and iniquity to be shut up; if any limbs, decent or indecent, are to be set in order, it is plain that it can only be effected by foreign hands:

> "By strangers honoured, and by strangers mourned."

They must be utter strangers, foreigners from a far, distant, and very strange land indeed, who honour certain subsisting abuses, and who would mourn them when they had been completely and finally removed. Whilst I pursued the pure and most merciful diet, I was often asked: "How can you be so cruel to yourself?" There was no cruelty in the case. When I had abandoned it, the question was: "Why did you ever relinquish what you found to be so agreeable? Why did you ever give it up?" I answered, half in jest, half in earnest: "Because I found that I was growing too good for this wicked

world; getting too moral, too wise, too pure, too virtuous to live in a faithless and perverse generation." My answer was always received with laughter, and indeed it was laughable and ridiculous enough; and yet there was some truth in it, as there often is in sayings that provoke laughter. Why does a man ever give anything up? Why does he ever take to anything new? These are questions more easily asked than answered. The intellect and the senses, physical and moral, are lighter, as it were, under the influence of a light diet. A complete renunciation of all fermented, stimulating, intoxicating liquors was coupled with the abstinence from flesh. The nonsense usually talked after dinner was too insupportably nonsensical, unless the faculties of the hearer were dimmed as well as those of the speaker. The ordinary commonplace of life seemed too commonplace to be borne by an understanding that is always clear and cloudless. Sympathy is indispensable to a sentient being, and, in order to sympathize with dull fellows, a certain amount of dulness is demanded. Possibly the mind needs repose as well as the body: to rest, to sleep, not only during the night, but in the working hours of day; and the soporifics of a heavy diet, and composing, sedative, stupifying drinks have their office and use.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE sale of Horne Tooke's library caused a lively interest, because it had been his habit to write notes in his books. From the specimens which I met with, these annotations would seem to be of no great value. Always trifling, often scurrilous and abusive, they did not reflect much credit on the annotator. Nevertheless, public curiosity was strong, and people bid with spirit against one another, to obtain possession of the annotated volumes. Mr. N. had presented his friend with an early copy of "The Return to Nature;" and he was most anxious to procure the important work, enriched with the important notes of a distinguished scholar, philologist, and philosopher. Accordingly, he commissioned a friend, who was to attend the sale, to purchase it for him, and to go as far as fifty guineas. The anxious author lay awake the whole of the night before the day when his work was to be put up, thinking of the severe competition that would so soon ensue; and as soon as it was light, he dispatched a note, autho-

rising his friend, should it be necessary, as most probably it would, to offer one hundred guineas. In the course of the morning, it occurred to him that it would be a pity to lose an inestimable treasure through ill-timed parsimony: he hastened to the house of his mandatary, to request him to extend the bidding to two hundred guineas. He could not expect to obtain it for less; and, in truth, it would be dirt cheap at that price. To his dismay, he came too late; his friend was already gone; the opportunity was lost, lost for ever! He returned home in great agitation, but gradually comforted himself by believing that Government would most assuredly purchase it for an enormous sum, and then he might hope to get a sight of it. Surely his college friend, Canning, would procure for him that gratification.

In the midst of his hopes and fears, his friend entered the room, with a thin octavo volume in his hand.

"Well, N., I have got your book for you! Here it is!"

"Did you really get it for one hundred guineas?"

"No! no!"

"I am glad you did not let it pass you. Two hundred guineas, I suppose. I shall never forget your kindness! Stop, I will write you a cheque for the money!"

"You need not do that. It is a six shilling book, you know; it was put up at one shilling. Nobody bid for it; so I offered eighteenpence, and it was knocked down to me instantly. Here it is, as good as new! It has never been cut open."

The self-satisfaction of an author may be checked for a moment, but happily it cannot be killed; if it be nipped a while in the bud, speedily, by the wise dispensation of a merciful Providence, it doth revive again. His mercy, fortunately for us, is over all his works, and more particularly over all the works of all his writing creatures,—good, bad, and indifferent. In a short time, therefore, after this cheap purchase, we heard:

"My poor friend, John Horne Tooke, was the wisest and best of men, in thought, word, and deed; a true philosopher, always consistent, always like himself! Look here," and the uncut, unopened volume was adduced in proof. "He would not read such a work as this in a cursory way. He could never bring himself to skim it over; he felt its importance, and the importance of the subject; he intended to take it in hand, to go regularly through it, to weigh every argument, to illustrate it with an ample commentary; and, until he could find leisure, it would have taken him a long time, a very long time, to have done it justice; so, until then, he would not even cut it open. There it is! Look at

it! It was just like him! It was his way! Poor fellow!"

To draw an illustration in a like matter from a similar neglect of an author,—one not breathing the elegance of Eton, or of the classical Christ Church, but of a rough, wild disciple of some Scottish University,—I will add one more instance:

I once took up a book in the reading-room of the British Museum: it was the only copy I ever saw. I never read the work myself, but I have been told that it is rather a sensible production, and treats fairly enough of the West India Islands, proves the benefits of Slavery, and shows, faithfully and fairly, that the Blacks were then, and not without reason, contented and happy. It was a presentation copy from a F.R.S. to the venerable President,—to Sir Joseph Banks,—whose library was acquired after his death by the British Museum. There was a complimentary flourish on a blank leaf at the beginning, in the hand-writing of the author. Nevertheless, this volume also was unopened, and probably for the self-same reason. That great and good man, and distinguished naturalist,—and such Sir Joseph undoubtedly was in his special department,—had not cut open a page, or read a single line, and never intended to do so until he should happen to find himself in a position to treat the volume as it deserved to be treated: if not carefully to weigh

and perpend the writer's statements, and to light them up by a lucid and ample commentary.

Did you ever see John Horne Tooke? Who ever saw him? I says the fly, with my little eye, I saw John Horne Tooke. With my own eyes, little or great, I saw him once. He was a fine, venerable old man,—a gentleman polite with the politeness of the old school. I was walking with a friend, one day, on Wimbledon Common, near his house, and we fell in with him. He greeted my friend cordially, shaking hands with him heartily. "I have not seen you for a long time; you never come near me now! Come and dine with me some Sunday—any Sunday. And bring your young friend with you; I shall be glad to see him." And he bowed to me in the antique style, taking his hat quite off his head, like a fine old English gentleman, one of the old school. "You know where to find me, and at what hour I dine. But, let me see, I shall hardly know how to entertain you! You have returned to Nature, little N——, have you not? You have withdrawn into the wilderness, like your precursor; and you live, like him, upon locusts and wild honey, do you not? I have no locusts and wild honey for you, but I will come as near as I can. You shall have shrimps and treacle, little N——, and plenty of them, I promise you, and these will do nearly as well. So mind you come soon."

With regret I add that the visit was never paid. It was proposed, moreover, to introduce Bysshe to him. He will be delighted with Shelley, and Shelley will be delighted with him. This was very probable, but unfortunately the author of the "Diversions of Purley" died before the meeting was brought about.

"Did you notice that he called me 'Little N——?' He always called me so; it was a term of endearment with him. He always addressed William Godwin as 'Little Godwin.'" The epithet "Little" was more applicable to William Godwin than to my friend. "Did you know John Horne Tooke? Did you ever see him?" I once asked a lady of unusual attainments, who had been acquainted with many of the men of talent and celebrity of her day. "I did not know him. I only saw him once; and that was casually, and by a mere accident. Mr. Fenwick took me one morning into the House of Lords, to see the place, which I had never entered before. There was a gentleman standing by the bar, engaged in earnest conversation—disputing, I may say—with a bishop. 'Do you see that person talking with the bishop? It is the celebrated John Horne Tooke.' I immediately drew near him, to catch, if possible, what he said. I heard but little; however, that little was characteristic. 'It is a gerund, sir!' said the bishop. 'A gerund! Impossible! There is no such thing as a gerund, my lord. There are

no gerunds in any language, I assure you. There is no such thing as a gerund!'"

The following anecdote was generally current soon after the death of the illustrious etymologist. It was believed by many; what truth there is in it I know not. John Horne Tooke had published, long ago, the first part of the "Diversions of Purley." It was read with wonder and delight. A second part appeared after a considerable interval; it was upon the same plan as the former portion, but it was certainly far less amusing. It was understood that he was occupied for several years in the composition of the third, the last and the most important part; in which he was to unfold the nature of the chief word in every sentence; of the word, the verb. It was long before he could content himself with his own peculiar mode of handling this difficult division of grammar; but at last the third volume also was finished. He delivered the precious manuscript in a sealed packet to his friend and pupil, Sir Francis Burdett, an interlocutor in the Purley dialogues, under the initial B., with a strict injunction to publish the book immediately after the decease of the author, but on no account sooner; the discoveries in grammatical science being far too weighty to be communicated to the world during the life of the inventor. A short time — a very few days only, some said, before his death, he desired B. to

bring the sealed packet. It was brought to him accordingly. He took it out of his pupil's hands, threw it instantly upon the fire, standing over it until it was entirely consumed, without uttering a word. The matter was frequently and sometimes vehemently discussed. The disappointed curiosity of the learned censured B. sharply, and probably unjustly. He did not know for what purpose the deposit was demanded. If he had known—if the command had been, "Bring the manuscript, that I may destroy it"—he might have expostulated, but could he have withheld it? Consequently, through one man's obedience, we are ignorant what the verb really is; probably we shall never know. We only know with certainty that there is no such thing as a gerund. With this scrap of knowledge we must even be contented; the rest is a sealed book to us, and worse, it is a book sealed up and burned.

I have been informed by persons acquainted with the habits of study of John Horne Tooke, that he used to carry in his pocket a card-case containing cards of the size of visiting-cards, but blank: whenever a thought struck him, when an important reference was made, a valuable authority cited, or some inquiry suggested itself to his mind, or was suggested by others, he wrote a brief memorandum with his pencil on a card, and replaced it in its case. The inscribed cards he slipt through a slit

into his desk,—"put it into the post-office" was his phrase,—that the matter might be taken up afterwards, and pursued by him at leisure. This ingenious device in aid of memory caught Shelley's fancy, but I am not aware that he ever adopted it; his cards, I fear, would have gone astray, like the prophetic leaves of the Cumæan Sibyl.

Another anecdote of the mode of taking notes by another illustrious personage pleased him still more; on this account, if not for the sake of its intrinsic worth, it is worthy to be repeated and remembered. For in hero-worship, nothing that relates to the object of adoration is trifling to the adorers. Blaise Pascal, to whom Shelley, however different in some respects, bore in others a striking resemblance, was fond of radishes; and he loved to draw them himself fresh from the ground in his sister's garden, as we are gravely assured by an admiring Jansenist: let it be known, then, to posterity that Shelley delighted in honey, and more especially in honeycomb. And so is it in demon-worship, demonology, or demonography; a recent biographer informs us that Robespierre was a voracious devourer of oranges. At the carpenter's house, where he boarded, there was always a large dish of oranges for him after dinner, and the empty skins piled upon Maximilian's plate attested, that the miscreant was not less thirsty of orange-juice

than of human blood. But to return to the anecdote. Our kind friend, J. F. N., informed us that some old gentleman of his acquaintance, whose name I have forgotten, came over from France in the packet with Rousseau and David Hume. The Scotch philosopher was sick, and kept below, but the citizen of Geneva was quite well and lively, and remained on deck. He was sociable, talkative, and inquisitive, and asked many questions. Observing this gentleman writing upon a substance that was new to him, he begged to know what it might be. It was ass's-skin, a substance much used formerly in pocket-books, but now seldom to be seen. The nature of the tablet was explained to him; how well it received and retained the marks of a black-lead pencil, and how readily the characters were effaced when it was wetted. Rousseau was much surprised at the novelty; upon which the gentleman presented him with the pocket-book, and it was accepted with great and almost childish eagerness. During the remainder of the voyage, with the infantine simplicity of genius, the most eloquent of philosophers was constantly playing with his new toy; busily writing upon the ass's-skin, wiping out, and writing again. Nevertheless, it is by no means impossible that the fanciful, capricious, suspicious man soon afterwards might take offence at the gift, imagine that some treachery lurked in it; that there was a

snake in the grass, that the smooth tablet was contrived purposely to betray and ruin him, poisoned by the deceitful David, and thereupon it might be committed to the flames. A subtle poison infused by the envenomed malice of the jealous, insidious Hume into the ass's-skin, gradually ascending up the pencil into the fingers, and proceeding thence along the arm, and finally arriving at the heart, and thereupon instantaneous death, or perhaps a more picturesque wasting, languishing, perishing by slow but inevitable decay: the bare idea of such an incident was charming to Shelley, and every tablet of ass's-skin was a page of romance.

To mention a third remarkable man, and one of the same leaven with the two former, if not of the leaven of the Pharisees,—Thomas Paine, whose style his admirers affirm is so correct, so pure, so plain, so distinct, so English, never made any alterations in his writing. There was not a single correction, never one erasure in his MS. His manner of composing, as I have heard persons who had known him relate, was this. He walked backwards and forwards about the room until he had completed a sentence to his satisfaction; he then wrote it down entire and perfect, and never to be amended. When the weather was fair, if there was a garden, a field, a courtyard, at hand, he walked about out of doors for a while, and then came in and

put down the sentence which he had arranged mentally, and went out again and walked until he was ready to be delivered of another.

Whenever he came in from a walk, from the streets or the road, he for the most part went immediately to his desk, and set down a finished sentence or two; sometimes a whole paragraph, a just paragraph, that needed no repentance.. It appears to me, I confess, that there is nothing wonderful, or admirable, in this. It matters little whether corrections are made in the head or upon paper. A blotted and blurred page is offensive to a man of precise and neat habits; and the author of the "Rights of Man" was very likely such, having been bred a Quaker. Besides, a person believing in immediate inspiration, cannot well tolerate emendations; for whatever has been inspired directly from above cannot need correction, or indeed admit of it. It was probably through the force of early habit that Friend Paine continued to the last to pen his conceptions in faultless, immaculate, unamended writing.

It was in the year 1813 that I first became acquainted with William Godwin. I saw him frequently in the course of that year, and in the year following; and afterwards I met him more or less frequently, according to circumstances. I had expressed a wish to know him, and I was soon invited

by a charming family, with whom he was intimate, to dine at their house, where I should find him and Bysshe. I repaired thither, to a somewhat early dinner, in accordance with the habits of the philosopher. I was not on any account to be late, for it was unpleasant to him to dine later than four o'clock.

It was a fine Sunday. I set out betimes, and arrived at the appointed place at half-past three. I found a short, stout, thickset old man, of very fair complexion, and with a bald and very large head, in the drawing-room, alone, where he had been for some time by himself, and he appeared to be rather uneasy at being alone. He made himself known to me as William Godwin; it was thus he styled himself. His dress was dark, and very plain, of an old-fashioned cut, even for an old man. His appearance, indeed, was altogether that of a dissenting minister. He informed me that our hospitable host and his family had been called away suddenly into the country, and that we should not have their company, but that Mr. Shelley was expected every moment. He consulted several times a large old silver watch, and wondered greatly that he had not come; but he would doubtless be with us immediately. He spoke confidently on a subject, which, to say the least, was doubtful. Bysshe, as was not uncommonly the case with him,

never came near us. Why he made default, nobody ever knew, least of all did he know himself.

"Had Mr. Shelley mistaken the day, the hour? Did he not know the place; surely he must know it, and know it well?"

I could only say, on behalf of my absent friend, that he often failed to observe his engagements and appointments. It was his habit; a disagreeable and most inconvenient one, certainly. Why and how he had formed it, I could not tell, although I was much interrogated and cross-examined on that head. It had been the way with him ever since I had known him, and it was only too probable that it always would be so. I could not explain, excuse, defend, or justify it; I could merely affirm that so it was.

At four o'clock, I rang the bell, and ordered dinner. To this order there were objections and expostulations.

"We ought, in common civility, to wait awhile. Mr. Shelley could not fail to be with us shortly."

The objections were overruled, and we two went to dinner; and we two were a multitude, to judge from the number of dishes on the table. Vegetable fare was the rule of the house, and I observed the rule myself; but meat of various kinds had been prepared in various ways for the cannibal guest. He dined carnivorously, but very moderately,

paying little attention to the plates of vegetables, which he seemed to contemn, as well as the lore by which they were zealously and learnedly recommended.

William Godwin, according to my observation, always eat meat, and rather sparingly, and little else besides. He drank a glass or two of sherry, wherein I did not join him. Soon after dinner, a large cup of very strong green tea,—of gunpowder tea, intensely strong,—was brought to him; this he took with evident satisfaction, and it was the only thing that he appeared to enjoy, although our fare was excellent. Having drunken the tea, he set the cup and saucer forcibly upon the table, at a great distance from him, according to the usages of that old school of manners, to which he so plainly belonged. He presently fell into a sound sleep, sitting very forward in his chair, and leaning forward, so that at times he threatened to fall forward; but no harm came to him. Not only did the old philosopher sleep soundly, deeply, but he snored loudly.

I got a book, and retiring to the window sat reading for half an hour, or longer, until he awoke. He awoke suddenly, and appeared to be refreshed. "Had Mr. Shelley arrived?" It was his first thought on waking. He would not take any more wine; he would not walk. It was a lovely evening, but he should have quite enough of walking in

coming and in returning. He would go to the drawing-room, and we went up stairs.

Sir William Gell's description of the island of Ithaca had just come out; a handsome quarto volume with engravings; and it lay upon the table. We looked over it together; it was new to both of us, and it interested us greatly. He discoursed much of Ithaca, of Greece, of Ulysses, of Troy, of Homer, and of Chapman's "Homer:" it was manifest that his acquaintance with the poems of Homer was chiefly, if not entirely, derived from Chapman's translation. However, he was quite familiar with the story, the characters, the manners of the Odyssey. We spoke nearly all the time we were together of the many extraordinary things, of many things hard to be understood, which are found in that ancient and wonderful poem. The tea-things were brought in. I made tea; I forget whether my companion partook of it. Tea was always most acceptable to me, particularly whilst I was a Pythagorean. Poor dear Pythagoras, with all his wisdom he did not know how to make himself a good cup of tea; or where he might purchase a pound of passable Pekoe, or of satisfactory Souchong. During the whole course of our conversation and operations, my respected associate ever and anon recurred, uneasily and impatiently, to a matter which distressed him sorely—the absence of Mr. Shelley.

Mr. Shelley and William Godwin—such was to be the form of speech; he persisted as pertinaciously in dubbing Bysshe Mister, as in rejecting the title for himself. He questioned me again and again on the subject, and I thought with a certain air of lurking suspicion, as if I knew more than I chose to tell; as if I were privy to the plot, and that there was some deep design in his non-attendance. If he really believed that I was in the confidence of the motives and the secret of his absence, he did me a great injustice.

I ventured to say a few words concerning his famous work on Political Justice; but the topic did not appear to be an agreeable one. The author spoke of it slightingly and disparagingly, either through modesty and politeness, or because he really had come to consider his theories and speculations on government and morals, crude, unformed, and untenable. Whenever that publication has been mentioned to him in my hearing, he uniformly treated the child of his brain like a stepfather. Possibly he felt that his offspring had turned out ill, and had not requited the patience and anxiety that a fond parent had bestowed upon an ingrate. At last he was reluctantly convinced that we should not see the truant. "Perhaps he was unwell? Did I believe that Mr. Shelley had been taken ill?" On the contrary, I firmly believed that

he was as well, and as unpunctual, as he had ever been in his life.

William Godwin took leave of me somewhat early, at ten o'clock precisely by the old watch, charging me earnestly and repeatedly to say a great many things to Mr. Shelley, whom most probably I should see first, by way of reprehension, admonition, and well-merited censure for his unwarrantable neglect. I promised to inform the offender of his disappointment and dissatisfaction. I did not know in what direction the grave reprover's homeward course lay, or whether he might desire any more of my society, and therefore I did not offer to accompany him, as I frequently did at our subsequent meetings. The next morning I saw Bysshe. He was delighted to learn that I had met with William Godwin.

"What did he say? What did we do? What did I think of him? How did I like him?"

He devoured me with greedy questions, and listened to my answers with eager curiosity and enthusiastic pleasure. But when, to keep my promise with the sage, I reported the proceedings of the preceding day, and inquired, in my turn, why he had been nonsuited at our sittings, and had lost his writ of Nisi Prius, the rocks are never more deaf to naked, shipwrecked mariners than his locked-up ears were to the interrogatories and reproaches which I faithfully conveyed to him.

In the same comfortable house, which looked upon a plain, at that time green and open with spacious fields, but now fashionable with Belgravia, I soon met William Godwin again. I entered the drawing-room one evening, and found him seated on the sofa; not alone, as before, but in a circle. He was stoutly maintaining, against several ladies, that hair and moss are the same substance, both growing in the same situation, and in precisely the same manner. His arguments were not successful; his paradox was not prosperous; he entirely failed to convince. I apprehend that the discussion arose out of the consideration of vegetable diet, and that he was endeavouring to show, that there is no essential difference between animal and vegetable substances. In society he was usually reserved, shy, and silent; yet did he always inspire a certain interest. Whatever he said, when he chose to be communicative, was listened to with attention, and was always worth hearing. He appeared to myself and to others to be a perpetual contradiction. He was at once pleasant and unpleasant, agreeable and disagreeable. His conversation was yielded so sparingly that it could never offend by excess, or seem intrusive; his speech was abrupt and curt, but every remark had its value, and was peculiar and characteristic. His works, the best of them at least, as "Caleb Williams" and "St. Leon," are read

with pleasure and with pain. The mind of the reader is strongly arrested and highly gratified; and yet he rises from the powerful volumes not without a certain uncomfortable feeling; and the like impressions were produced by personal intercourse with the highly-gifted author. His articulation was indistinct; his utterance was not easy, but impeded by a sort of effort or catch, sharp and dry. It seemed to be painful to the speaker as well as to the hearer. This it certainly was to a stranger; but one got accustomed to it by degrees, and then one found in it peculiarity, individuality, and character; and these qualities would be wanting, if the quality of his voice were less grating and inharmonious.

He was cherished by the kind and amiable family through whose favour I first knew him, and treated with politeness and deference, and his company was courted. Having been put up to it probably at home, he seemed to labour to introduce his family also to their notice; but in this attempt he was not encouraged.

At our second meeting he was in no hurry to depart; it was long after the old watch had pointed to ten that he rose to take his leave. The lady of the house informed him that I was going in the same direction, and that I would attend him. As soon as we found ourselves in the street, he put his arm through mine, and we trudged homewards

together. He proceeded to the City, to Skinner Street; I wished him a good-night, or a good-morning, in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. I have frequently walked the same distance with him—a considerable distance, especially by the side of a short-legged old man, who got over the ground slowly.

Head to head, as the French have it, he was by no means silent, as he was in mixed societies. He was communicative, conversible; he chatted as he walked with short, tardy steps, but without interruption or intermission. When I reached my lodgings I went instantly to bed to sleep; for however late the hour of taking rest might be, I never failed to rise punctually at seven. I should have acted a wiser part—I should have discharged the functions of a Boswell better—if I had sat up for half-an-hour, and had committed to paper notes of what I had just heard. But I went to sleep—to forgetfulness; and therefore my recollections of the Diversions, not of Purley, but of Piccadilly and Long Acre, are now but meagre and scanty.

"What is your principal line of reading?"

"Law."

This course of study was not approved of. The Caliph, Ebubekr, said, "that women are an evil, and that they are a still greater evil because they are a necessary evil." So my legal studies were disapproved of all the more because they were inevitable.

"What else do you read besides Law?"

"Greek and Latin, French and Italian, the classics and modern languages."

"Do you never read English books?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"Of what kind?"

"Voyages and travels, history, and biography."

"All of them modern?"

"Almost entirely new publications."

"Have you read none of our old English writers?"

"Very few. Shakespeare; little besides."

I was strongly and seriously advised to take the old English authors in hand. Several of them were indicated and recommended. The father of English literature, of English poetry, was especially introduced to my notice, and urged upon me.

"But I should not understand his language; his English must be so antiquated, that I could not comprehend it."

"By no means; you will find no difficulty. There are a few antique, obsolete words in his poems, no doubt, but very few; far fewer than you would suppose; and there are glossaries to explain these; you will find no difficulty whatever."

The illustrious poet, whose life and times William Godwin set forth in detail, and in a ponderous quarto, was so constantly and perseveringly pressed

upon me, that I promised, as soon as I had leisure, to begin to read his poems; and ere long I fulfilled my promise.

"Godwin," said Charles Lamb to his friend, "you have read more books that are not worth reading than any man in England!" There is some truth and much exaggeration in all such sallies of wit. But this is not the place for a disquisition on the old English poets, dramatists, and prose-writers; it is needless to discuss at length their merits and defects here.

The importance of the treatise on Political Justice has surely been greatly over-rated. The notion that any serious danger was to be apprehended from its influence on the public mind was perfectly preposterous. Utter impracticability is the most striking feature of the work. It is incredible that any one, however weak and timorous, really considered it dangerous and mischievous. It suited the ends of trading alarmists to affect to believe, and to represent, that it was a formidable production; for during the infectious terror diffused around by the French Revolution the trade in alarm was carried on to a great extent: it was sometimes lucrative, and, moreover, it was very easy, for a man incapable of anything else could at least pretend to be frightened. On the other hand, the merits of the book were much too highly estimated by its

admirers. There is little of novelty in it; it contains nothing so absurd as not to have been said already by some of the philosophers,—of the French philosophers. The style and composition are cold, crude, indigested; it is never so frigid, although always frigid, as when the author desires to be warm; and it never crawls and creeps so low as when he would rise on high, and seeks to soar. I used sometimes to presume to laugh at it, to turn it to ridicule, to the great annoyance of Shelley, who struggled vehemently to defend the style, as well as to prop up the speculations and sophisms of the halting sage. "There are more Its in it," I boldly affirmed, "than in any other book of the same bulk." I sometimes counted the number in a page, in proof of my assertion. "It was a mere Iteration," I said; "an incessant iteration of the word IT from the beginning to the end." Yet, with all its many and great defects, it is a work of considerable merit, containing various ingenious problems, speculations, theories, and doubts, well worthy of a careful perusal, and calm and patient consideration. So also is "The Enquirer," a subsequent work by the same author, of smaller dimensions, less pretentious, and which attracted less attention and produced less hostility.

This passage from "Political Justice" was at one time in everybody's mouth; it was illustrative of

the completion which the endless perfectibility of the human species would some day receive upon earth. "It is by no means clear, to make use of a familiar instance, that hereafter a plough may not be turned into a field, and perform its office without the need of superintendence." "And that a needle," it was likewise said, "might not in like manner be turned loose upon a piece of linen, and it would one day make a shirt of itself." These expectations, if such they may be called, were quoted in those days as extreme and laughable instances of presumption, credulity, and insanity. Nevertheless, we now read of steam-ploughs, and we may view sewing-machines, by which, to a considerable extent, forebodings once deemed dangerous, impious, and revolutionary, have been realised. The recent triumphs of modern mechanical art, of mind over matter, have thrown ancient ingenuity, even of the highest order, sadly into the shade: let us take one instance. "In Egypt I saw Cleopatra's Needle," a young lady returning from her school in England to her home in India, wrote lately to her friends, "but I thought very little of it, I assure you, after having seen the sewing-machine in London."

People are used to talk very positively of Shelley's principles, and solemnly to assure the world, which does not care a straw about the matter, that they do not participate or concur in them. I

knew Shelley more intimately than any man, but I never could discern in him any more than two fixed principles. The first was a strong, irrepressible love of liberty; of liberty in the abstract, and somewhat after the pattern of the ancient republics, without reference to the English constitution, respecting which he knew little and cared nothing, heeding it not at all. The second was an equally ardent love of toleration of all opinions, but more especially of religious opinions; of toleration, complete, entire, universal, unlimited; and, as a deduction and corollary from which latter principle, he felt an intense aborrence of persecution of every kind, public or private. He certainly was at all times prone to discuss, to attack, or defend the curious speculations which abound in the writings of William Godwin, and of divers French authors of that age, but he never seriously and in good earnest adopted their startling and unhealthy paradoxes.

Bysshe's uncle, John Shelley, who was his father's half-brother and was much younger, nearly twenty years younger, than "old Timotheus," called on him several times. He was a short, dumpy man, of a plain and rather common appearance, and far inferior to his elder brother in stature and vigour. He treated Bysshe with kindness, with marked civility and respect; and he seemed to have the good

sense and penetration to perceive, that his family had reason to be proud of a young poet and philosopher of divine promise. He regretted that he was not on better terms with his father, and that the latter was so unreasonable, and he invited his nephew to visit him at Penshurst, who was not inclined to accept the invitation. He disliked his aunt, and complained of her pride and inordinate pretensions, with what foundation I know not; and that she was mean and stingy, except for purposes of ostentation, as in entertaining the French emigrant nobility. In estimating his judgment of his relatives, as well as of other persons, I express in this instance a caution, which is always implied, that considerable allowance ought to be made for a poetic and imaginative temperament. Mr. T. Shelley suffered at times severely from gout. On one occasion he was very seriously indisposed, in considerable danger indeed, from a sharp attack of gout in the stomach. He occupied, during his illness, a small room on the ground-floor at Field Place. Bysshe's sisters told me, that they well remembered seeing their brother several times a day watching and listening at the door of the sick-room, to try to discover how his father was, how he was getting on; he was then about fourteen years of age, and at that time he was exceedingly fond of his father. The poor Eton boy, in his filial solicitude and tender

anxiety, standing thus on the watch, is a pleasing and natural picture. Surely it was not well done; it was injudicious, and worse, by a harsh, intemperate, despotical exercise of paternal authority, to alienate a youth of such kindly feelings, and to lose for ever so warm and affectionate a heart. When he was not crossed, Mr. T. Shelley is represented by those who knew him best, to have been a kind man. Acts of kindness toward Tom Medwin have been related to me, and also towards other persons.

It was early in the summer of the year 1813, and, I believe, under the tranquil auspices of the able and mute Quaker physician, with whom I had a silent interview two or three months previously, that the elder of Harriet's two children came into the world, and nearly two years after her marriage. I have not got the exact date of this important event. I have read in some periodical that it took place at Cooke's Hotel, in Dover Street; this I think is a mistake. They removed from Half Moon Street to a small house in a quiet back street in Pimlico, of which I have forgotten the name. I called there pretty frequently, taking it in my way, to inquire after the mother and daughter, and I always received a favourable report of their well being. All the matrons, prophetesses, predicted that as the good Harriet got over it so quickly and so well, she must be a strong little woman, and would certainly live a

long time, and have a very large family. The first time I called there, was so soon after the birth of the child, that it is hardly possible to suppose that she could have been removed thither from Dover Street. The situation had been chosen in order to be near a very agreeable lady, to whom Bysshe was warmly attached, and who had lodgings a few doors off in the same retired street.

I never set foot in the house; my visits did not extend beyond the door. They did not remain there long—not above a month, I think. The little girl was named Ianthe Eliza. She received the latter name, doubtless, in honour of the guardian angel, who still continued to officiate, occasionally at least, in that capacity. Ianthe, violet flower, or violet, is a name of Greek origin, fetched immediately from Ovid's Metamorphoses, being the name of a girl, to possess whom another girl, Iphis, was transformed into a youth:

"potiturque suâ puer Iphis Ianthe."

The fable is pleasing, and the name pretty; yet as the young father had so many good old names amongst the ladies of his own family, it is a pity that he did not prefer one of them to so fantastical an appellation. The Yankee Cockney practice of bestowing flowers of fancy names has a vulgarity,

affectation, and pretension about it, and was unworthy of him. It was better adapted for the issue of a metropolitan rhymster than for a gentleman's daughter. This accession to his family did not appear to afford him any gratification, or to create an interest. He never spoke of his child to me, and to this hour I never set eyes on her. This I regret, as I believe she is a most estimable person, and in every respect worthy of her parents, and, moreover, suitably married; Ianthe the second having found a second Iphis, it is presumed, without any transformation. I often asked Harriet to let me see her little girl, but she always made some excuse. She was asleep, being dressed, or had gone out, or was unwell. The child had some blemish, though not a considerable one, in one of her eyes; and this, I believe, was the true and only reason why her mother did not choose to exhibit her. She could not bear, herself a beauty, that I should know, such was her weakness, that one so nearly connected with herself was not perfectly beautiful.

Although I did not visit the young cock bird in his breeding-cage during the few weeks he inhabited it, I sometimes met him at the house of our common friends, and several times in particular at the adjacent lodgings of the lady friend, for whose sake he had emigrated to Pimlico. She was an amiable and accomplished old lady, and tolerably agreeable, but

too much of the French school to be quite so, and the greater part of her associates were odious. I generally found there two or three sentimental young butchers, an eminently philosophical tinker, and several very unsophisticated medical practitioners, or medical students, all of low origin, and vulgar and offensive manners. They sighed, turned up their eyes, retailed philosophy, such as it was, and swore by William Godwin and Political Justice; acting, moreover, and very clumsily, the parts of Petrarchs, Werters, St. Leons, and Fleetwoods. This strange selection was made, this queer medley was brought together, partly from a certain French love of presiding over, ruling, forming, and managing, and it was imagined—a great mistake—that low people would prove the most tractable and submissive; and partly through the love of equality, of levelling, and fraternising.

I bore with the rabble rout for a little while, on account of my friend, and because I could there enjoy his precious society; and they had made him believe that their higgledy-piggledy ways were very right and fine, and conducive to progress and perfectibility. However, a young English gentleman, of a liberal education, an Etonian and Oxonian, soon grew weary of persons so ill-suited to his aristocratical feelings and habits, and began to train off.

The last pilgrimage I made to the abode of perfect republican equality, I met Bysshe near the door, towards which he was advancing with mighty strides and his wonted rapidity. I seized his arm, and said, "Come along; let us take a walk together; let us leave the sentimentalists to ripen for the gallows by themselves!"

He laughed so long and so loud at a sally that strongly arrested his sympathies, and I joined him so heartily in the mirthful and contemptuous explosion, that several of the good people of the quiet street opened their windows, and looked out to discover the cause of the unusual disturbance. Whilst he was hesitating, I still kept hold of his arm, and finally I carried him off as lawful prize. We had a long walk to the westward, through fields, and afterwards we enjoyed a cup of strong tea, or rather, to tell the whole truth, many cups, in a still coffee-room, at Kensington.

"How I wish I could be as fastidious and exclusive as you are," he sighed forth, as we walked; "but I cannot——"

A good-humoured, paternal old waiter brought the kettle to our table so often, which he always kindly assured us was "'byling'"—and the kettle fully confirmed his assurance,—that he was provoked to remark: "You like your tea, gentlemen, I think!"

We finished our tea at last, but not until we had sworn in our cups to cut the unprejudiced, levelling confraternity.

From the quiet street in Pimlico they retired to Bracknell, a still quieter place, where Shelley took a small house with the attractive title, "High Elms," with his ordinary purpose of remaining in it for ever. I did not visit him, because I was about to proceed to the North, to spend the long vacation there, as usual, before he was well settled in his pleasant retirement. . .

HIGH ELMS, BRACKNELL, *July* 27, 1813.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I was disappointed at being unable to call on you on Sunday morning. My presence was required at home, but as I shall be in town in a few days, I expect still to have the pleasure of seeing you before your journey to the North.

Tell me when you depart from London. I am anxious to see you, or if I cannot, to write to you at greater length. It is far most probable that we shall remain here until the Spring.

I know you will be happy even to receive these few lines, and therefore I do not wait until to-morrow, when I should write a longer letter.

Your very affectionate Friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

CHAPTER XV.

One evening, at the commencement of August, I took my seat on the box, or top, of the Edinburgh mail, and in due course, by a progress which in those days we were so unenlightened as to consider rapid, I reached my destination. That amount of vacation which I annually gave to myself, I fully and freely imparted to my law-books; pleading and pleaders, with all their counts, common and uncommon, and pleas, general and special, I left behind me with my books in London, to keep holiday also, or to do worse. I usually devoted my vacation to a careful study of the Greek classics, but this autumn I had to redeem two pledges. I had undertaken, at the suggestion of a lady, to read "Sir Charles Grandison;" and I had promised William Godwin to take Geoffrey Chaucer in hand. The day after my arrival I borrowed "Grandison" of my aunt, my father's sister, who lent me the numerous, well-thumbed volumes joyfully; observing, that it was a good sign in a young person to desire to read that

excellent work. The same morning I took down from its shelf in my father's library, a fine old edition in folio and black-letter, a volume which I had never opened before, of Chaucer's Works. I found the proceedings of the most exemplary, faultless personages in Richardson's famous novel extremely tiresome, and I passed over the early portion of the long-winded narrative too rapidly for edification; but my attention was powerfully arrested, riveted, by the Lady Clementina and her family. I experienced little difficulty with Chaucer, less even than the assurances of my adviser had led me to expect. The "Canterbury Tales" delighted me; so much, indeed, that I read them a second time some five or six years afterwards, in Tyrwhitt's edition, on the summer circuit. The other poems of Chaucer contain many striking passages of infinite poetical merit, but on the whole they proved tedious; yet I persevered, and steadily read the "Romance of the Rose," and so on, quite to the end of the big book. I looked into sundry old English writers subsequently, at different times, through the like suggestions. It really seemed to me that these good people were dead, quite dead, fairly dead; they had died a natural death, and it was vain to try to resuscitate them.

That spirited publisher, William Caxton, selected the productions of his unrivalled press with great

judgment, no doubt, and in accordance with the taste of the fifteenth century, but not by any means of the nineteenth. Jane Shore probably found them agreeable reading, I did not: to dispute concerning tastes is a vain thing. If the lovely Jane had repaired to Skinner Street with one of Caxton's new volumes, wet from the press, under her arm, and had read it aloud to William Godwin, as the lovely Harriet was accustomed to read aloud to me, the venerable sage, in sooth, would have thought it most amusing, and truly delightful.

I did not receive any letters from Bysshe, or any account of his proceedings, from himself or Harriet, during the period of nearly three months, which I passed in the North. I heard afterwards that he spent some weeks agreeably at High Elms; but he did not remain there for ever, or even until the Spring, by reason of his own inherent restlessness, and the pernicious action of disturbing forces. He had a long visit from an amiable and interesting family, to whom he was warmly attached, and who doated upon him. They came to him in a body,—father, mother, and five fine children. His visitors were devoted, heart and soul, to the return to Nature and to vegetable diet, which we may readily believe was faithfully observed whilst his orthodox friends were under his hospitable roof. He had

also two or three neighbours, in whose superior society he found pleasure and amusement.

The cheerful village, where the wanderer had pitched his tent, was within a pleasant walk of London, according to our estimation of distance in those youthful days, and with our habits and practice of walking. There was every motive to induce him to remain content and comfortable in his present position, and none whatever for changing it. I also followed exactly the canonical observances of the vegetable church of Nature; and I found them far from disagreeable in the country, and during the summer and autumn. I did not stumble upon anybody who was disposed to follow my example, however excellent or edifying it might seem. It is true that I did not seek to proselytize, or desire to attract followers or make converts. Nevertheless, nobody objected. I represented my singular fare merely as a whim—a fancy; such, in truth, it was, and I was freely permitted to follow my fancy.

I sought exercise and amusement in shooting, and I devoted much time to that diversion, as I did for several years. I shot, during this season, game which I was not to eat. My way of gaining an appetite was in direct opposition to my mode of satisfying it. A striking incongruity—a patent contradiction; and such my existence—at once blood-thirsty and bloodless—would certainly have

been, if I had taken up my line of feeding on the principles of Pythagoras, or of the Brahmins, or perhaps upon any principles whatever. But I was commonly contented to leave their fine, fixed principles to wiser heads than my own; to slay or to scare partridges from sunrise to sunset, for three or four days in every week; and to return home at dusk and refresh and restore myself, first, with vegetables and fruit, and finally with copious potations of tea.

On the intervening days of rest I read Chaucer's ponderous, black-letter tome. It occupied much of my time, yet I did not altogether neglect the Greek Classics. On the contrary, I found leisure to read carefully, and with unspeakable delight, nine of the eleven comedies of Aristophanes; the other two plays I had read before. For that purpose I borrowed a nice, readable edition in octavo of a friend, who had devoted himself exclusively to Greek literature. The painfully minute characters of my little pocket Aristophanes were too trying even for eyes that had then seen only twenty-one years and a few months.

I have sometimes compared the calm, stationary, I may almost say retrograde, life of the owner of the octavo edition of the one inestimable sample of the old comedy that alone remains to us, with the troubled, restless, innovating career of the roving

occupant of High Elms. I am now attempting to delineate the eccentric orbit of the latter luminary; let the former describe for himself his steady revolution during a triennial period round a single centre and sun of Grecian learning. The marked diversity in the motions of two distinguished scholars will be curious, amusing, and possibly not without instruction.

The very obliging lender of Brunck's Aristophanes was formerly a member, not without distinction, of a college of high repute in Oxford.

"I rise early; I always did; and I take one mouthful of air before breakfast—no more. I begin to read immediately after breakfast, that I may get a walk and appetite before dinner, which is essential."

He spoke modestly of his dinner, but we will hope that he invariably made such a meal as, in a wealthy establishment, a clerk in holy orders ought to make.

"I have my tea pretty soon after dinner; it freshens me up. I cannot read again until I have had my tea. When I have finished my book, in the summer—in the winter it would be ridiculous—I take a turn round the garden, when I am at home; when I am by the sea-side, on the sands close to the sea. I am not much of a supper-man; I never was; but I love just to play with a crab before

going to bed; or with something of the kind, and to swallow a spoonful or two of warm negus.

"I read nothing but Greek. I have a three-years' course of Greek authors, which I go over every three years."

He promised to give me a list of the authors, with dates showing the time which he gave to each. I reproach myself for letting the opportunity slip; for never having procured what I might then have obtained at any time.

"I read a few pages of Virgil and of Cicero two or three times in the year, just to satisfy myself that although they are very clever, very good in their way certainly, they are not to be compared with the Greek writers, but are immeasurably inferior in all respects; that it is a waste of time for a man who can read Greek to read their writings.

"On Sunday it is different. I do not read the classical authors; it would not be proper. I look over the newspaper very lightly; once a-week is enough. I read the Septuagint, the New Testament, and perhaps a homily or two of Chrysostom; in the original, of course.

"A newspaper once a-week, and very little of it, is sufficient surely. I will not say absolutely, that since the age of Pericles nothing has happened in the world, that a man of sense ought to care about. But since the publication of the last Greek author

of acknowledged merit—I will not say the last classic, for I would not be illiberal or too restrictive —there has been no event that we need trouble ourselves much about. Of course, I except our blessed religion,—that is a thing quite apart; I say nothing about that now; I speak only of profane matters—of secular affairs. When two or three scholars get together, we talk, you know, like heathens.

"Homer is an exception to my three-years' course—the only one. I read him every year.

"I reside in a country town; and I go every year to the sea-side in the summer, during the long days, for a month. I read a book of the 'Iliad' every day before dinner, and a book of the 'Odyssey' daily after dinner. In a month there are twenty-four week-days; there being twenty-four books in each poem, it just does it.

"The sea-side is the proper place to read Homer; he speaks so much of the sea. I throw in the 'Hymns'—there are commonly two or three rainy days in the four weeks, when I cannot take a walk; so I always contrive to throw in the 'Hymns' and the 'Frogs and Mice.'

"I always use the 'Oxford Homer,' as it is called. The Greek text, in four volumes octavo; without the Latin interpretation, but with the Greek scholia of Didymus, or whoever he was. I make use of common editions," he showed me several of them,

"without many notes; for if I had to read many notes I should never get through. I use no other lexicon than 'Scapula;' I find it quite sufficient."

He produced a folio edition of Scapula, in which by long use he had worn a hole that would have contained a pair of stockings. He continued his triennial course of reading without interruption for thirty years, and consequently read Homer through thirty times; the other Greek classics ten times.

"I have looked into the translations of Homer: they are very poor affairs. I have heard much of a German translation, by Voss, but I do not understand German; I am quite content with the original. I have looked into Cowper's: I like his translation of Homer as little as I like his religion! I never published anything; I never wrote a line for publication. I have always been most unwilling to increase the sum of human errors: it is large enough already, to say the least."

To have written a good book on the Tranquillity of Life, as the Scotchman, Volusenus, Wilson did, is something, but it is far more to have actually and so admirably practised it. I repeat my regret that I did not get from him his Itinerary of three years' journey and progress through the principal Greek authors; it would have been a literary curiosity, and interesting to many students, as the regular orbit of an ordinary mind, although of a very high order, to

whom the erratic course of a transcendent genius,—of a comet that blazes across the zenith once in a century, would be perplexing and incomprehensible.

This excellent scholar and clergyman had no family; his clerical duties were none, or trifling; he was not a man to neglect any duty, of superior, or inferior, obligation; and he had a competent, a moderate income, derived from private sources, and independent of ecclesiastical stipends and benefices.

CHESTER STREET, *Oct.* 21, 1813.

AFTER allowing your elegant and friendly letter to remain so long unanswered, you will perhaps suspect that I am incapable of making a due estimate of its merits; but the truth is, I am a reluctant writer, unless stimulated to the use of my pen by painful emotions. This peculiarity of my nature will, I trust, at least acquit me of not receiving pleasure from your ready compliance with my request; for I do not forget that Clementina's woes were introduced to your acquaintance at my suggestion, and that I likewise urged you to favour me with your opinion of this celebrated composition, of which the episode is incomparably the most interesting part.

In your estimate of the character of Grandison, you must keep in view that Richardson designed to paint a perfect *civilised* being, whose passions are

always obedient to his reason. She never for one moment quits the helm,—a disgusting object enough, I will confess, contrasted with the wild and beautiful starts of passion so conspicuous in his fair mistress. But the fidelity and consistency with which his hero is delineated and supported throughout the work, proves, indeed, what has never been denied to Richardson,—the true character of genius.

In reading this voluminous novel, we never confound one object with another, and the images remain indelibly impressed on the mind. This, at least, was the judgment I formed of it years ago, for it is long since I wept over the artificial woes of Clementina, whose madness is the most touching picture of the kind, I believe, in the literature of any country. We have, indeed, the authority of an excellent scholar on this subject, Dr. Warton, who concludes his encomium on this masterly performance by saying, that he questions whether it would not be pedantry to prefer the madness of Orestes to Clementina's, or whether even Lear's has so many strokes of genuine passion. The author, who does not yield the palm to Euripides, or Shakspeare, has surely the strongest claim to our admiration and respect.

From this subject I turn to one, I am persuaded, not less interesting to you: your friends, the Shelleys, who were all well when we parted.

Since their arrival in the North, where, I imagine, necessity will fix them for some time, we have had no tidings of them. The lady, whose welfare must be so important in your estimation, was, as usual, very blooming and very happy, during the whole of our residence at Bracknell: Ianthe grown surprisingly, and Miss Westbrook ever smiling and serene. They have made an addition to their party, in the person of a cold scholar, who, I think, has neither taste nor feeling. This Shelley will perceive, sooner or later; for his warm nature craves sympathy, and I am convinced he will not meet with it in his new acquaintance.

My sister, who would be flattered by your inquiries, if she knew of them, was quite well a fortnight since. We all look with pleasure to your return; not omitting Mr. Lawrence, who always speaks of you as you deserve.

That the temper and habits of your associates do not meet all your wishes, is far from surprising me. I never yet found in the country of this distinguished isle enlightened and agreeable persons of either sex; they are too scattered for one to light upon them by accident. Even the capital is not too rich in unprejudiced thinkers; and upon those, society, with its frauds, lays so firm a claw, that half their merit is of necessity cast into the shade.

I read the first part of an early work of yours,

and see it was the production of a very young man, some portions of which your mature judgment will not confirm. When we meet I will venture to discuss with you its beauties and defects.

Mr. N. has already acquitted himself of his agreeable debt to you, and, having of course talked of his health, it only remains for me to speak of the other members of my family, who would be pleased by your inquiries, if they were old enough to estimate the value of them. Octavia and Camilla, I think, you will find improved; my elder son progressing towards scholarship, and the younger boy fast into breeches; and Coraly light and nimble as a fairy.

I hope you will eat your Christmas dinner with us, whether you continue one of the holy or not, for no change of habits of such a nature can alter the esteem with which I subscribe myself

Your very sincere friend,

CORNELIA N.

To T. J. H., Norton.

It was from my fair correspondent that I first learnt that my young friends had taken themselves off to Edinburgh. I ignorantly supposed that Bysshe was living happily in his peaceful abode in Berkshire, and I wondered, so far as I could ever wonder at any of his proceedings, at his protracted

silence, and vainly speculated on the possible causes of it. No doubt I addressed at least one letter to Bracknell, to be read only by the winds that played in the tops of the High Elms. I confess I was surprised at the unexpected intelligence of his sudden and absurd flight, of his second and causeless visit to the metropolis of Scotland; where, of course, he would remain for ever, as usual; or, it was imagined at least, that necessity would fix them there for some time. It was falsely pretended that necessity had driven them thither. The journey was performed, I believe, in that carriage for the price of which I had been arrested in the spring. As a measure of rigid economy and a matter of strict necessity, they had posted four hundred miles at an enormous expense. I marvelled at the rash and extravagant delusion, and was curious to discover by what evil counsellor it had been put into their heads, but I could never find it out.

At the end of October, and soon after the receipt of the charming letter which brought to me the unwelcome tidings of this overt act of folly, I returned to London. I resumed my professional duties and legal education in the Temple. I consecrated my evenings, whenever I was at liberty, and my Sundays invariably, to the delightful society of my amiable, accomplished, and intellectual friends.

Nobody could give me any news of the fugitive, whose absence from our circles was deeply deplored; and the ruthless marauders were bitterly execrated who had cruelly despoiled us of our beloved companion, and choicest and most exquisite ornament. I was constantly reminded of the choice of Hercules; of that fable, or apologue, in which the half-god is placed between Virtue and Vice, who contend for the possession of him. Thus was it with our three-quarter god; there was always a contest for him, between forward, spunging vulgarity, that would live out of him, on the one hand,—and on the other, the modest, fostering elegance, that cherished him, and would cheerfully have maintained him, had it been needful. Unfortunately, and by reason of the fourth part of mortality's frailty, that clogged and weighed down his otherwise divine nature, the poor fellow, unlike Hebe's husband, did not on every occasion make the more eligible selection. Our uneasy speculations were at last terminated by a letter, which came to hand one calendar month after my return. Here it is; may it be as acceptable to every reader as it was to us!

EDINBURGH, *Nov.* 26, 1813.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have written to you several times since I received your letter at Bracknell. My letters were

directed to you at Stopton in Durham, but I suppose that you had nothing particular to communicate in return—as, indeed, their contents were not of extraordinary importance.

I am happy to hear that you have returned to London, as I shall shortly have the pleasure of seeing you again. I shall return to London alone. My evenings will often be spent at the N.'s, where, I presume, you are no unfrequent visitor.

Your novel is now printed. I need not assure you with what pleasure this extraordinary and animated tale is perused by me. Everyone to whom I have shown it agrees with me in admitting, that it bears indisputable marks of a singular and original genius. Write more like this. Delight us again with a character so natural and energetic as Alexy —vary again the scene with an uncommon combination of the most natural and simple circumstances: but do not persevere in writing after you grow weary of your toil; "aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus;" and the swans and the Eleutherarchs are proofs that you were a little sleepy.

I have for some time given myself to study. I have read Tacitus, many of Cicero's philosophical works (who is, in my estimation, one of the most admirable characters the world ever produced), and Homer's "Odyssey." I am now studying Laplace, "Systême du Monde," and am determined not to

relax until I have attained considerable proficiency in the physical sciences.

I have examined Hume's reasonings with respect to the non-existence of external things, and, I confess, they appear to me to follow from the doctrines of Locke. What am I to think of a philosophy which conducts to such a conclusion?—*Sed hæc hactenus.*

A new acquaintance is on a visit with us this winter. He is a very mild, agreeable man, and a good scholar. His enthusiasm is not very ardent, nor his views very comprehensive: but he is neither superstitious, ill-tempered, dogmatical, or proud.

I have translated the two Essays of Plutarch, περὶ σαρκοφαγίας, which we read together. They are very excellent. I intend to comment upon them, and to reason in my preface concerning the Orphic and Pythagoric system of diet. Adieu! Believe me to be ever sincerely attached to you. My dear friend,

I am yours affectionately,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

When will the Dead Letter Office give up her dead? At that joyful resurrection of lost, departed thoughts we may read not only the several letters so strangely misdirected to me at Stopton in Durham,

but many other of my friend's precious communications, which, on other occasions, unfortunately miscarried. We see, however, from this single letter, the small remnant that was saved, how true he had been to his nature—an ardent, sedulous, enthusiastic student. We perceive also that, with the like truth, he was in as great a hurry to quit Edinburgh as he had ever been to reach it. He was desirous to quit it by himself; to swim to the shore alone, to get speedily out of that ocean of delights into which he had inconsiderately plunged. This he was not permitted to do.

Not very long after the receipt of his letter, but how long I do not remember, he came back to London—not a solitary, as he had proposed, and free, but in custody. He entered, most unexpectedly, one of our evening circles, together with some of his associates, and with an abruptness on the part of the latter that was not altogether relished. Upon the like principles of philosophical frugality the return to London had also been performed by post. On their way to or from Scotland, I think, the party had made some deviation into the Lake district. I never heard the details of his second northern progress. Bysshe never spoke to me on the subject; he seemed to have no pleasure in the retrospect. He looked forward with fervid eagerness, and seldom did he review the past with satisfaction. I must

except his sojourn at Oxford; to this he always recurred with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret: there only did I ever see him completely at home. Time wears on, passing by with an equal foot, whether we sit still in an easy-chair in our study, conning over the Greek Classics in a mazy round, thrumming and thumbing Scapula, and travelling only to the end, wind and weather permitting, of the broad gravel-walk in the vicarage garden; or whether, flying off at a tangent, we dash away on the instant to the farthest corners and most hidden nooks of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, in order that we may rush wildly back again, posting up to London in utter destitution and with four horses.

The year 1814 had come upon us. In that year—and at the beginning of the year, I think—Shelley published a work entitled, "A Refutation of Deism: in a Dialogue." It is handsomely, expensively, and very incorrectly printed, in octavo. It was published in a legal sense, unquestionably; whether it was also published in a publisher's sense, and offered for sale, I know not, but I rather think, that it was: the preface informs us that it was intended it should be. I never heard that anybody bought a copy; the only copy I ever saw is that which my friend kindly sent to me: it is inscribed by his own hand on the title-page: "To his friend, T. Jefferson Hogg, from

P. B. S." I never heard it mentioned any farther than this, that two or three of the author's friends told me, that it had been sent as a present. It is a short dialogue, comprised in 101 pages of large print. Eusebes and Theosophus discourse together, and dispute with each other, much as the author himself loved to dispute, when he could find an opponent; whenever Eusebes could find a Theosophus and get up an antagonistic dialogue. It is written in his powerful, energetic, contentious style, but it contains nothing new or important, and was composed and printed also, in a hurry.' He never spoke of it to me, or in my presence. It attracted no attention; and doubtless Shelley himself soon discovered that it did not merit it. The subject of vegetable diet is brought in, dragged in, and in a crude, undigested form. The whole matter is disposed of briefly, triumphantly, and dogmatically, in a single paragraph, in these words:

"It is the necessary consequence of the organization of man that his stomach should digest his food. It inevitably results also from his gluttonous and unnatural appetite for the flesh of animals, that his frame be diseased, and his vigour impaired. But in neither of these cases is adaptation of means to end to be perceived. Unnatural diet, and the habits consequent upon its use, are the means, and every complication of frightful disease is the end.

But to assert that these means were adapted to this end by the Creator of the world, or that human caprice can avail to traverse the precautions of omnipotence, is absurd. These are the consequences of the properties of organized matter, and it is a strange perversion of the understanding, to argue that a certain sheep was created to be devoured by a certain individual of the human species, when the conformation of the latter, as is manifest to the most superficial student of comparative anatomy, classes him with those animals who feed on fruit and vegetables."

A long quotation is given in a note from Plutarch's treatise on eating flesh. It is in the original Greek, without any translation either in English or in Latin; a convincing proof that the dialogue was not addressed to unlearned readers. Plutarch shows very clearly that the internal structure of a human being is not suited to digest raw flesh, nor is the outward form of man so constructed that he can conveniently seize upon, and worry, and devour a stag, or a bullock, or even a kid, or a lamb, after the manner of a lion, a bear, or a wolf. This is perfectly true, but this is not the question. It would take a good many Plutarchs and Porphyrys to prove, even with the powerful aid of Joe Ritson and Dr. Lambe, that man may not add a little cooked meat to his vegetables. A squire first catches his hare by his

greyhound; secondly, he dresses it by his cook; and, thirdly, he eats it with a mealy potato and a slice of bread, by the assistance of a friend; and, fourthly and lastly, he digests it at his ease, in the same good company, pouring a glass or two of good old port wine upon it.

This comfortable mode of living, say the philosophers, being universally adopted by the gentry and clergy throughout merry England, is the fruitful parent of physical and moral suffering. It is the cause that a flea-bitten Scotchman has the itch; that a dog has the mange; and that an Irish hodman, having taken too much whisky overnight, at waking his mother, and falling from a ladder, pitching upon his head, and fracturing his skull, dies upon the spot. You cannot cut down a fir tree with your teeth, and saw it into lengths with your nails. Therefore, says Plutarch, in spite of your axes and saws, you shall have no planks, no inch deals!

Whether the immortal Goëthe could have produced the poems of the Divine Shelley, I will not presume to decide, or even to inquire; but I will assert confidently that Shelley could not have written Goëthe's novels. Whilst he was still a boy,—a boy of magnificent promise,—he threw off hastily two extravagant romances, and published them as hastily. He never brought forth another

novel, but he was often nibbling at one: he had commonly some tale on the anvil. He used to transmit choice passages to me, an ill-natured Aristarchus, a very Zoïlus; for he said that I discouraged him. I am in part, not wholly, guilty. I encouraged and exhorted him to proceed, but to proceed, for the most part, in a more sober, subdued tone; to give a little repose and respite to the nerves, spirits, and feelings of the harassed reader. A raging sea, an eruption, an earthquake, a whirlwind, must not last for ever; not even for a long time. He was fascinated by "The Sorrows of Werter," who has not been? and he was of opinion that a continuation, or rather an enlargement and amplification of the narrative, was demanded. Albert certainly ought to have made a splash; on the contrary, he exhibited a culpable indifference, in taking things coolly, like an honest German as he was. His wife was dear to him, no doubt, and with abundant reason; but so also were his sausage with cabbage, his Rhenish wine, his Bavarian beer, and especially his pipe. If, therefore, by an undue sensibility to the young ladies' vagaries, he had brought on an indigestion, or broken in upon the hours sacred to his tranquil enjoyments, he would have disturbed that balance and equipoise of soul which constitute the perfection of reason.

I appended my impertinent remarks, and sent the

papers back, as he desired. They were destroyed, or lost. However, I found one morsel, it appears, to relate to the amplification of Werter; and the worthy Albert is supposed to be doing the right sort of thing, in the right way. I had omitted to return it. Would that I had been as negligent on other occasions! It is in Shelley's hand-writing: it has never been published, and the subject is familiar and popular.

CHAPTER XVI.

FRAGMENT OF A NOVEL.

You deceive yourself terribly, my friend; it is another source of proof to me that you should have written to Charlotte, as you have.

It convinces me at the same time of your real sincerity, great, self-deceptive, continued vehemence of passion, which borrows respect, deference from distance. It convinces me more forcibly than ever how unfit it is that you should live near us; it convinces me that I, by permitting it, should act a subservient part in the promotion of yours and Charlotte's misery. I am more and more convinced, that from a connection such as this, even intellectual, nothing but misery can arise: your passions impose upon your reason, if this is not evident to your apprehension. I either actually do, or merely affect to put self out of the question; this we will not discuss; if similar effects follow, the consideration of causes must be useless labour. You say you fear that you have lost my good opinion.

"Good opinion" is very comprehensive, certainly. I no longer estimate your powers of resisting passion so highly as once I did. Certainly, I no longer consider your reason as superior to the sophistry of feeling, as once it was. How can I? to what have you yielded? How terrible, how complete has been the perversion of that reason I once almost fancied omnipotent. I admit the distinction which you make between mistake and crime. I heartily acquit you of the latter. Yet how great has been your mistake; even now does it continue. You never could think it *virtue* to act as you desired. You might, indeed, have been so far imposed upon by feeling as to imagine that virtue did not forbid it. I said I thought you were insincere—true. I do not wonder that you shudder at the accusation. It appears to me perfectly natural that you should at the same time be disguising, veiling, palliating; you should think yourself the pattern of disinterestedness, which once you were, which once I hope again to behold you. I said you were insincere. I said so because I thought so. I still think so; but you are imposed upon by feeling the contamination of falsehood is far, far from you. One expression in your long letter, your last letter, convinces me that you are still enthralled by feeling. It is merely an instance. "I must, I will convince you, &c. I must, or——, the alternative is terrible,

but decided. You shall believe, &c., or, when *too late*, you shall feel." This gives me pain. This proves to me that, so far from being now under the guidance of reason, you wish to enforce my belief in you by an act, which itself is inadequate to the excitement of any belief, but that of *your* selfishness, or to *revenge* my want of it by this very act, which you know would embitter my existence. Else what means "you *shall* feel *when too late*."

This, my friend, is not convincing. It might be enough (supposing I thought you remained in the state of mind which dictated that) to make me *say*, I believe in you, but not to *make* me believe in you. What will then make me again believe you to be what you were? Simply to resume that character which once gained the credence, the loss of which you complain of. Think, reason, methodize. Your present incapacity for all these; my conviction that your exposure to Charlotte's attractions would augment that incapacity, are the limits of the change of my opinion regarding you. It appears to me that I am acting as your friend—your disinterested friend—by objecting to your living near us at present. Certainly, I am depriving myself of the very great pleasure of your society: this, however, is necessary; to this I submit.

You hint in your letter to Charlotte your obligation to *me* for introducing you to her. Certainly,

if I deserve any disservice at your hands, it is for unwittingly exposing you to the temptation and consequent misery of this very intercourse. Here, again, I see that feeling peeping out which would destroy our hopes again. Think not that I am otherwise than your friend; a friend to you, now more fervent, more devoted than ever, for misery endears to us those whom we love. You are, you shall be my bosom friend. You have been so but in one instance, and there you have deceived yourself. Still, let us continue what we have ever been. I will remain unchanged, so *shall* you *hereafter*. Let us forget this affair; let us erase from the memory that ever it had being. Consider what havoc one year, the last year of our lives, has made in memory. How can you say, then, that good will not come; that we shall not again be what we were! Good and evil are in an ever-varying routine of change. If I am wretched this month, the arising of another may see me happy.

You will say, perhaps, that it is well for *me* to reason; I am cold, phlegmatic, unfeeling, that I compromise for those sins which I love, by railing against those, which are matters of indifference. In the first part of this charge there may be some truth, I have more than once felt the force of this. Is constitutional temperament the criterion of morality? Believe me, that this more than excuses

to me the present irrationality, incongruity, and inconsistency of your words and actions; I cannot avoid, however, seeing, that they are incongruous, nor seeing it, avoid earnestly desiring, that they may be otherwise.

Prove to me satisfactorily, that virtue exists not, that it is a fabric as baseless as a schoolboy's vision —then take life, I will no more with it. I would not consent to live, to breathe, to vegetate, if this vegetation simply went on to imbibe for no other end, than its own proper nutriment the juices, which surrounded it. Does the vegetable reason on the good it does to the air, when it absorbs azote? does the panther destroy the antelope for the public good? does the lion love the lioness for his sake, or her own? Prove, that *man* too is necessarily this; my last act may be an act of this very selfishness, but it would be an act precluding the possibility of more of it, and I would leave the world to such, as could bear to inhabit its surface. Prove this, and I will say you have acted wisely. The argument concerning morality mentioned in your last letter was intended for this. But though I think you insincere (though without being conscious of it), I do not think that this is your opinion now; yet, stay, what did I remark in your letter to Charlotte? It proves, at the same time, the sincerity, undisguisedness of your passion. Yet the insincerity,

which I have remarked as secretly betraying you.

You talk of female excellence, female perfection. Man is in your declamation a being infinitely inferior, whose proudest efforts at virtue are but mockeries of his impotence. Charlotte is the personification of all this contrast to man, the impassionateness of the most ardent passion, that ever burned in human breast could never have dictated a compliment (I will not say, a piece of flattery) more excessive. She perceived it (for she has shown me your letter), and remarked with much indignation on the repetition of that continued flattery, which you had made your theme ever since she knew you. I wish you would investigate the sources of this passion, my dear friend; you would find it derived its principal source from sensation.

Let your "too, too great susceptibility of beauty," your very own sincere expression in your letter to Charlotte suffice to convince you of the true state of your feelings. This caused your error primarily: nor can I wonder. I do not condemn, I pity; nor do I pity with contempt, but with sympathy, real sympathy. I hope I have shown you that I do not regard you as a *smooth-tongued traitor;* could I choose such for a friend? could I still love him with affection unabated, perhaps increased? Reason, plain reason, would tell you this could not be. How

far gone must you have been in sophistry, self-deception, to think sensation in this, in any instance laudable.

I am not happy. I tell you so. My last letter was written in the acuteness of feeling; but do you wish that I should be happy? Reassure yourself, and then be assured, that not a wish of my heart will remain ungratified, as respects you. I have but *one* other wish beside; to that, at present, I will not allude more. Charlotte will write to you to-morrow. May I require, that, as one proof of self-conquest, you will throw the letter into the fire, suppressing all thoughts of *adoration*, which I strongly suspect to arise from mere sensation, sentiment. But the letter will arrive first: it will be pressed to the lips, folded to the heart, imagination will dwell upon the hand, that wrote it; how easy the transition to the wildest reveries of ungratified desire!

Oh! how the sophistry of the passions has changed you! The sport of a woman's whim, the plaything of her inconsistencies, the bauble with which she is angry, the footstool of her exaltation! Assert yourself, be what you were. Love, adore; it will exalt your nature, bid you, a man, be a God! Combine it, if you will, with sensation, perhaps they are inseparable; be it so. But do not love one, who *cannot* return it, who if she *could, ought* to

stifle her desire to do so. Love is not a whirlwind, that it is unvanquishable!

This epistle from Albert to Werter is forcibly written, with great power and energy; but it wants the warmth, the tenderness, of Goethe and Rousseau. The tone is rather that of the novels of William Godwin, or Holcroft; it is cold, bald, didactic, declamatory, frigid, rigid.

It is a real pleasure, a tranquil, contemplative, long-drawn pleasure, to write a novel; a great luxury! I speak from experience, for I once indulged in it myself; and, during a long vacation, which I passed in London, I composed a novel. I walked every morning from the extreme west to the Temple, a distance of some five miles; I was always seated at my desk by nine o'clock, and I continued writing until the clock struck four, when I walked home to dinner. This I did every day, except Sunday, for three or four months. It was in three volumes. I wrote it off freely, with scarcely a single erasure or alteration. The neat and natty Quaker, Thomas Paine, could hardly have produced fairer copy; but our valued friend would have written in a very different strain; no fictions, but only what he esteemed truths, home truths. Moreover, I wrote the whole of it with the same pen, just nibbing it from time to time, but not often, and

it was only a stump when I began to write with it. Cardinal Chigi wrote for three years with the same pen; the Earl of Chesterfield, who relates the anecdote, says it was a proof of a little mind in his Eminence to notice such a trifle. We may congratulate ourselves, therefore, that little minds are still to be found amongst us.

The novel was never published. Several years after I had written it, I was asked to contribute to the "Monthly Chronicle." I sent some articles composed expressly for that periodical, and afterwards, not having leisure to write more such, I gave portions of my unpublished novel. The greater part,—almost the whole, I believe, of the first volume, — was printed thus; and if the "Monthly Chronicle" had not been discontinued, most probably the whole work would have appeared. It commences with No. 30, and terminates with No. 40, for then the Chronicle ceased, under the title "Some Recollections of Childhood;" a title not by any means applicable to the novel, but which was continued from some previous contributions, of which it was sufficiently descriptive. It attracted no notice or attention, I think; it was either too good, or not good enough for the public taste; the "Monthly Chronicle" itself, indeed, did not prosper; not being trashy enough for the readers of magazines.

However this may be, it is a great gratification to an author to write a work of fiction, and I wish that Shelley had enjoyed it also, as well as myself, and more than once. It is sweet for a sensitive mind to take refuge in imaginary scenes; and by writing much he would have learned at last to write with moderation and calmness, as a horse too fresh at starting becomes, in the end, temperate through his own violence. I have sometimes thought of writing another tale, but I have always been distracted and diverted from this my diversion by other occupations and engagements, more lucrative, but less attractive.

To turn from the dominions of imagination to sober, sad realities, and to look back for a moment. Shelley had published anonymously, and without a date, in the preceding year, I think, in a small neatly printed pamphlet of twenty-three pages, his celebrated Letter to Lord Ellenborough, occasioned by the sentence which he passed on Mr. D. I. Eaton, as publisher of the third part of Paine's Age of Reason. It is written with force, fervour, and energy, and unflinching boldness,—possibly, we should add, with a burning zeal on behalf of the freedom of speech, of the pen and the press; and the author resolutely and eloquently enforces the motto of his title-page,—that religious opinions are of too high a nature for human interference,

Deorum offensa Diis curæ,—on the extreme principles of absolute, universal, unlimited toleration. It would be impossible to satisfy a liberal curiosity by extracts, it is only by a perusal of the work itself, that its nature, scope, and purpose can be fully understood; and it ought to be read with a due consideration of the circumstances under which it was composed, in times before it was generally recognised, that persecution for the expression of opinions on matters of religion, in whatever manner expressed, invariably defeats its object. Now let us return to our flock.

The good Harriet had fully recovered from the fatigues of her first effort of maternity, and, in fact, she had taken it easily. She was now in full force, vigour, and effect; roseate as ever, at times, perhaps, rather too rosy. She had entirely relinquished her favourite practice of reading aloud, which had been formerly a passion. I do not remember hearing her read even once after the birth of her child; the accustomed exercise of the chest had become fatiguing, or she was weary of it. Neither did she read much to herself; her studies, which had been so constant and exemplary, had dwindled away to nothing, and Bysshe had ceased to express any interest in them, and to urge her, as of old, to devote herself to the cultivation of her mind. When I called upon her, she proposed a

walk, if the weather was fine, instead of the vigorous and continuous readings of preceding years.

The walk commonly conducted us to some fashionable bonnet-shop; the reading, it is not to be denied, was sometimes tiresome, the contemplation of bonnets was always so. However, there is a variety, a considerable variety and diversity in the configuration of bonnets. When we descended into the region of caps, their sameness and insipidity I found intolerable. They appeared to me all alike, equally devoid of interest; I could not bring myself to care whether there were two or three more sprigs in the crown, or a little more or less lace on the edge. Besides, a cap was never quite right; it must be altered on the spot, taken in, or let out; that could be done in a minute; the minute was a long one. And, uniformly, too much or too little had been effected by the change; it was to be altered again in another and a longer minute. I rebelled against this, so I was left outside the shop, like a wicked rebel, for one moment.

To loiter in the street on a cold day, for the indefinite and interminable period of one moment, was a punishment too severe even for rebellion and high treason, for treason against a high-crowned cap. So the walking, as well as the reading, came to an end.

When I called on Bysshe, Harriet was often

absent; she had gone out with Eliza,—gone to her father's. Bysshe himself was sometimes in London, and sometimes at Bracknell, where he spent a good deal of his time in visiting certain friends, with whom, at that period, he was in very close alliance, and upon terms of the greatest intimacy, and by which connection his subsequent conduct, I think, was much influenced.

In the spring of the year 1814, I changed the scene of my professional avocations and legal education from the Temple to Gray's Inn; to a sufficiently uninviting locality commanding a full view of Gray's Inn Lane. I had already passed one year with a conveyancer at York, and two years in the Temple at the chambers of a special pleader under the bar. I was now about to employ a fourth year with a barrister of considerable standing and eminence, who had much pleading business, but of a laborious, rather than of a lucrative description. It was said of him with a certain forensic facetiousness, that he had all the bones to pick. Cases of difficulty and intricacy were placed almost exclusively in his hands.

My position, therefore, with him was esteemed an enviable one, as being highly instructive, and so no doubt it was, so far as matters of that kind can afford any instruction. He had, moreover, the distinguished honour and happiness to be what is

familiarly called the Devil of the Attorney-General, and consequently we had an abundant, never-failing supply of tiresome indictments, interminable criminal informations, and other wearisome crown-business.

He had four pupils. Of these the first was a younger son of a high judicial functionary: he fully confiding in his father's opportunities and inclination to job him at the commencement of professional life into lucrative offices, that were properly designed to afford consolation to persons of merit at the otherwise unrequited conclusion of it; relying entirely upon the wonted sordid and shameless rapacity, the necessary result of over-payment, never once saw the interior of his instructor's dingy chambers, and indeed they were not inviting.

The second pupil came once to chambers, to get out of the way of his father, who had come up from Bath with the avowed purpose of ear-wigging his son for some indiscretion; and the young gentleman judged, that wherever else his father might seek him, he would never look for him at chambers: and he judged rightly.

The third attended pretty regularly, but he never chose to draw anything; he employed himself diligently in copying all the precedents of indictments that he could lay his hands upon, and they were many; of these he made a considerable

collection. He was a baronet, and a man of good landed estate: what advantage he expected to derive from his MS. indictments, I could never learn, or even conjecture.

Consequently, whatever drawing was to be done fell entirely upon the fourth pupil, and the amount was by no means trifling. My mornings were fully occupied in covering quire after quire of draught-paper with endless repetitions and fatiguing tautology. The whole duty was laid upon the willing horse, and he was worked hard, but not to death.

My ancient and laudable master, who wore the aspect of an immemorial usage incarnate in the flesh, or rather vested in skin and bones, shaken together incessantly by a choking, husky cough, which was older and more inveterate than the period of legal memory, was detained all day in the courts at Westminster. He had more to attend to there than he could possibly have coughed through, slowly after his wont, during the full end and term of two thousand years, if it had been devoted solely to clearing off arrears, without a single new entry. It was only in the evening that he could do duty at chambers; accordingly, we were employed together in going over what I had committed to paper during the morning, whilst he was shaking the arsenal, fulmining over Westminster Hall, and

struggling to choke himself, without being absolutely suffocated, by his chronic spasmodic bursts of eloquence.

I was kept, therefore, almost every evening at chambers, often until a late hour, in settling our ponderous, voluminous masses of nonsensical jargon. The occupation was the more tedious, because my husky old Trebonian was dark through excess of brightness; his mastery of law was so complete, that his certain science had become doubt, and he knew so much, that he knew nothing, like those who most truly know. In the midst of our elaborate settling, some doubt would present itself. He stated it modestly, and began on the instant to take down his books, one after another; to find authorities, to lay the open volumes upon the tables and chairs, and often upon the floor around us. When he had collected matter enough for a month's hard reading, he looked at the accumulated references in despair.

"Well! Well! Time presses; I am afraid we must proceed. We must leave it as it is; they will lose the term else. We will clear up the doubt another time."

We went on pretty smoothly for a while, the chronic cough permitting; but presently another doubt arose.

"Stay, stay; stop a moment!"

Another set of books was taken down, opened and laid in a second, and not less formidable tier upon the former, until he had satisfied himself that the second Gordian knot was as insoluble as the first; and the solution of this was postponed likewise.

"Let us go on; the defendants are in a hurry, they want their plea; we must try it for once as it is. We will clear up the matter another time."

When the nightly sittings terminated, we were literally hemmed in on all sides with books, lying one upon another, and to be put back into their shelves unread by the old clerk next morning, in order to clear a passage to the next evening's seat of doubt.

O most egregious of black-letter judges, you have been sitting for some years now by the side of Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Æacus, have you made an appointment yet? Have you at last fixed that other time, Old Boy, when all the matters which we left undecided are to be cleared up; when all those points of pleading, questions, and doubts, are to be decided and set at rest?

Such were the Diversions, not of Purley, or of Long Acre, but of Holborn Court, Gray's Inn! They interfered sadly with my attendance in our select circles and elegant society; however, it was very instructive.

My irksome duties were all the more irksome, inasmuch as no printed book of precedents, no printed forms, were admitted within the dingy walls of the dark chambers; all was in manuscript. The most perplexed and complicated transactions, upon due examination, often resolved themselves into the common forms of pleading, and these were to be painfully written out, as well as the most special matters. It was doubtless the true course to keep the lovely, beneficent science of special pleading in its pristine and perfect purity, but it was not the way to make money.

My frequent breach of engagements of pleasure, and my inevitable absence from our favourite and accustomed places of resort, gave great umbrage to Bysshe, who blamed my devotion to pursuits abhorrent to the Muses and Graces.

He inveighed in no measured terms against my self-sacrifice, my base preference of a dim peep through a blackened, uncleaned window at Gray's Inn Lane, to the full view of the glories of nature and art, which we might have enjoyed together. "I am fully convinced, as far as human experience extends, and it extends a great way in every direction, both in time and in space, that lawyers, not priests, are true enemies of knowledge. Learned, meaning thereby most ignorant, is the designation, which they have adopted, and freely bestow upon each other:

a learned friend, a learned brother, a learned judge, the learned gentleman. To be learned in the law, means to be unlearned and deeply ignorant of everything besides; learned only in the law; learned precisely as a mule, or a bullock, is learned; stubborn, stupid, and intractable." The poor fellow seemed to prove by his bitterness, that he had already, in the slang of certain metaphysicians, a pure, anticipated, precognition of the favours and benefits, which he was destined ere long to receive at the hands of lawyers. But of this hereafter. Moreover, I have been told that Shelley had met with some unfavourable specimens in his own neighbourhood, hence he conceived so early in life an intense and abiding dislike of lawyers.

If I saw less of my incomparable friend during my bondage in Holborn Court, if we met less frequently than both of us eagerly desired, our pleasure was all the more vivid, when, triumphing over untoward circumstances and overcoming difficulties, we were able occasionally to come together.

It became necessary to perform some surgical operation on Ianthe, the excision of a tumour, I believe. The operation was successfully performed; the able surgeon who operated, told me he expected that the young mother would leave the room; he hinted, and finally suggested that she ought to go away, saying plainly, that it would be too painful

for her to witness it. But, no; she thought proper to remain, and the business proceeded. She stood by her infant, narrowly observing all that was done, and to the astonishment of the operator, and of all who were present, never betrayed, from first to last, any—the smallest signs of emotion. In the whole course of his experience, he declared he never met with such another female; she could have no feeling whatever. And he farther remarked, that a person who was able, to discourse so calmly, so apathetically of suicide, could not possibly feel under any circumstances, either for herself or for others.

Whether his conclusions were correct, I will not presume to affirm, or to deny; I simply state the observations which he made to me, and which had been elicited by this singular manifestation of fortitude, of passive fortitude, or of Spartan insensibility.

In the spring of the year 1814, Shelley spent much of his time, as has been already related, at Bracknell; coming occasionally to London, and going continually backwards and forwards.

The following elegant epistle, conceived and penned somewhat in the French taste, will throw light upon his proceedings there, and show the nature of his existence, amidst the fumes of a slightly sickly sentimentality :—

BRACKNELL, *March* 11, 1814.

YOUR most agreeable and welcome letter is a bribe, which will hardly let me tell you how much I was startled at the assertion to which I owe it. I cannot, now I am sober, confirm what you say I maintained the other night, "that, to follow our inclinations *on all occasions* is the first and great commandment." Look round, and you will see that I could not mean this; at least, as a general rule. And here is a new proof, which I wanted not, that from the warmth of argument never springs, or can spring, anything but misstatement and misconception. If I should grant anything like what you say, I must load it with such limitations, exceptions, and explanations, as will amount to a lawyer's interpretation, and that you will not thank me for. Perhaps the following precept of Champfort, taken in its best sense, will satisfy you, and certainly comes much nearer to my meaning:— "Jouis et fais jouir sans faire de mal à personne; voilà toute la morale." This I have always maintained against a dear and ingenious sophist, who labours hard to persuade us, that in concerns of the heart, "s'abstenir c'est jouir;" and that it is wisdom to shut it against every feeling that can possibly bring with it any pain; as if everything worth having must not be purchased at this price, which (to use the words of an arch friend of mine) "God in his infinite mischief" has

been pleased to set on every pleasure he grants to us, his poor suffering children, whom in his love he chasteneth.

When I have been delighted by the beauty and fragrance of the rose, I have sometimes doubted whether we could strip it of its thorns without injuring its beauty; and certainly I have never doubted whether it would be wise to renounce such beauty and fragrance because of the thorns that guard it. Alas! yes! Joys can and do pass away, and we must lament over them for ever; but that which does not pass away is the susceptibility of pure joys; which, with a lavish hand, nature scatters everywhere around her favoured children, to whom she gives, to make amends for all their sorrows, the power of going out of themselves for pleasure. A loving soul bears about within itself a living spring of affections, which keeps it fresh in spite of blights from evil things and evil men, and suffers no good feeling to wither and to die.

I will not have you despise homespun pleasures. Shelley is making a trial of them with us, and likes them so well, that he is resolved to leave off rambling, and to begin a course of them himself. Seriously, I think his mind and body want rest. His journeys after what he has never found, have racked his purse and his tranquillity. He is resolved to take a little care of the former in pity to

the latter, which I applaud, and shall second with all my might. He has deeply interested us. In the course of your intimacy he must have made you feel what we now feel for him. He is seeking a house close to us; and, if he succeeds, we shall have an additional motive to induce you to come among us in the summer.

If old Salomon had not his bewitching musical talent, his lively feeling, to which, by the bye, he owes it, would seize upon our affections, and hold them fast. Certain strains sung by my sister make me so melancholy I cannot bear them; and, if anything could make me a convert to his iron philosophy, it would be to hear her sing, and to think that she has never been happy. I hear at this distance the heart-rending complaint of Ariadne, and feel that the world is a desert. With such a feeling as this Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse is closely connected. Her sufferings, often so forcibly and naturally expressed, interest me deeply. Read the long letter to the contemptible object of her unhappy passion, soon after his marriage, containing her character of him, and pity the woman, whose understanding so plainly saw his unworthiness, and yet was so impotent in the struggle with her passion. This speedy answer to your letter says plainly, that whenever you feel inclined to favour me with a letter, it will be right for you to follow

your inclination, which must be productive of great pleasure to me. My sister never writes; scold her for me, if you can. At all times I can ill bear her silence, and less well now than ever, when I suspect it proceeds from low spirits. Thirty miles cannot separate me from my friends. That is not the worst evil of absence, for those we love we bear about in our hearts; but, the groundless apprehensions which spring up to alarm us, when we might be tranquil, are very hard to bear. Next month we shall come to town to pass some weeks, when I hope we shall see you often. Shelley will write to you the first day he is in the humour for writing; in the meantime he unites with every member of this family in kind regards, to which I can only add the assurance of my cordial and friendly attachment. HARRIET B.

Excuse a thousand blunders and much confusion of expression, for I write, talking occasionally to Shelley of twenty different subjects.

To T. J. H.

BRACKNELL, *March* 16, 1814.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I promised to write to you, when I was in the humour. Our intercourse has been too much interrupted for my consolation. My spirits have not sufficed to induce the exertion of determining

to write to you. My value, my affection for you have sustained no diminution; but I am a feeble wavering, feverish being, who requires support and consolation, which his energies are too exhausted to return.

I have been staying with Mrs. B. for the last month; I have escaped, in the society of all that philosophy and friendship combine, from the dismaying solitude of myself. They have revived in my heart the expiring flame of life. I have felt myself translated to a paradise, which has nothing of mortality, but its transitoriness; my heart sickens at the view of that necessity, which will quickly divide me from the delightful tranquillity of this happy home,—for it has become my home. The trees, the bridge, the minutest objects, have already a place in my affections.

My friend, you are happier than I. You have the pleasures as well as the pains of sensibility. I have sunk into a premature old age of exhaustion, which renders me dead to every thing, but the unenviable capacity of indulging the vanity of hope, and a terrible susceptibility to objects of disgust and hatred.

My temporal concerns are slowly rectifying themselves; I am astonished at my own indifference to their event. I live here like the insect that sports in a transient sun-beam, which the next cloud shall

obscure for ever. I am much changed from what I was. I look with regret to our happy evenings at Oxford, and with wonder at the hopes which in the excess of my madness I there encouraged. Burns says, you know,

> "Pleasures are like poppies spread,
> You seize the flower—the bloom is fled;
> Or like the snow-falls in the river,
> A moment white—then lost for ever."

Eliza is still with us,—not here!—but will be with me when the infinite malice of destiny forces me to depart. I am now but little inclined to contest this point. I certainly hate her with all my heart and soul. It is a sight which awakens an inexpressible sensation of disgust and horror, to see her caress my poor little Ianthe, in whom I may hereafter find the consolation of sympathy. I sometimes feel faint with the fatigue of checking the overflowings of my unbounded abhorrence for this miserable wretch. But she is no more than a blind and loathsome worm, that cannot see to sting.

I have begun to learn Italian again. I am reading "Beccaria dei dilitti e pene." His essay seems to contain some excellent remarks, though I do not think that it deserves the reputation it has gained. Cornelia assists me in this language. Did I not once tell you, that I thought her cold and reserved?

She is the reverse of this, as she is the reverse of everything bad. She inherits all the divinity of her mother.

What have you written? I have been unable even to write a common letter. I have forced myself to read Beccaria and Dumont's Bentham. I have sometimes forgotten that I am not an inmate of this delightful home,—that a time will come which will cast me again into the boundless ocean of abhorred society.

I have written nothing, but one stanza, which has no meaning, and that I have only written in thought:

"Thy dewy looks sink in my breast;
Thy gentle words stir poison there;
Thou hast disturbed the only rest
That was the portion of despair!
Subdued to Duty's hard control,
I could have borne my wayward lot:
The chains that bind this ruined soul
Had cankered then—but crushed it not."

This is the vision of a delirious and distempered dream, which passes away at the cold clear light of morning. Its surpassing excellence and exquisite perfections have no more reality than the colour of an autumnal sunset. Adieu!

Believe me truly and affectionately yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

I hear that you often see the N.'s. Present my kindest regards to Mrs. N.; remember me also to her husband, who, you know, has quarrelled with me, although I have not consented to quarrel with him.

To T. J. H.

In this most touching, melancholy letter only did Shelley ever mention to me the children of his first marriage; and here he speaks of Ianthe merely incidentally, and rather to show his dislike for another, than his love of her. I never heard any explanation of the cause of the intense aversion to which he gives utterance in such bitter terms. Every allowance and deduction being made for the fervour and fire of his poetic temperament, and for his sensitive, impressible, imaginative nature, his strong language will still seem far too strong. His violent antipathy was probably not less unreasonable than his former excess of deference, and blind compliance and concessions towards a person, whose counsels and direction could never have been prudent, safe, or judicious.

Bysshe was completely fascinated with his paradise in Berkshire, of which an eye-witness will presently attempt to give a sketch. He always called the presiding divinity "Meimouné." Why he gave her this name, I could never learn. She did

not resemble the heroine of the oriental tale in appearance, conduct, or opinions. A lady, who was an inmate of an eastern harem, would be little versed in French sentimentality; certainly Meimouné never read Wieland's "Agathon" in the French translation, or in the German original; and never held or taught, that love, to be true, genuine, and no counterfeit, of which beware, must be purely a sentiment, neither more, nor less.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was the Spring Circuit, the absence of my Common Law Mentor on the Northern Circuit gave me some short respite of leisure; the dark Chambers were shut up; but that my legal mind might not perish of inanition, lacking wholesome intellectual food, he kindly lent me, as a special favour, for my necessary sustenance, whilst he was away, a thick folio volume of his MS. Precedents. I patiently transcribed the most tempting of these in the morning at my lodgings. I was finishing the task of the day and about to go forth to dinner, when transcription and dinner were suddenly put an end to by a strange and unexpected apparition. A friend entered the room in a state of extreme agitation.

"What is the matter?"

"You must proceed to Bracknell instantly."

"But why?"

"You must go instantly!"

"Instantly, I have not dined."

"It is of no consequence."

It was of no consequence whatever to him certainly, and of but little to myself. "To-day, it is late; will it not be better to go to-morrow morning? Will not that do as well?"

"No! You must go at once; to-day, instantly, or you will not get a conveyance."

To set out so abruptly, on so short a notice, was rather inconvenient; however, the distance was trifling, the journey not formidable, and I should find Bysshe there, and my friend's anxiety would not brook a refusal, or even a brief delay.

"You need not take anything with you; you will find all you can want there."

He seized my arm and marched me off to some coach-office in the city. I gathered from my uneasy companion on our way, that his lady was at Bracknell, staying with the same family, as Shelley; that she had lately gone thither, and had been taken very ill; so ill that she would not say how ill she was. She asserted indeed, that she was not at all ill, which was the more alarming. Her letters were most unsatisfactory. "So you must go and see how she is, and return and report to me the condition in which you find her." The mission was a delicate and embarrassing one, far more unpleasant than the sudden journey. "I am no judge of the illness of a lady, nor indeed of any one. I do not understand such matters. She may be ill, and not like

to tell me what is the nature of her complaint; if she tells me, I shall not half comprehend her. If it be a serious illness, she will be in bed, and then, of course, I shall not be allowed to see her. Send some medical man!"

I named two, or three. "Any one of these will go; will go as a friend, if you wish it."

"I have no confidence in any of them, but much in you; none in any body else. You must go; I cannot go myself, I dare not leave my children."

He urged his suit with such a passionate, pitiable earnestness and mournful vehemence, that it was impossible to refuse.

"You will get there in good time, it is only thirty miles; they will give you dinner, you need be in no apprehension about that. Stay there a whole day, stay over to-morrow. They will be charmed to have you with them. See as much of my poor wife as you can; be as much with her as possible; and then come back the next day, dine with me at six, and tell me what you think of things."

For this slight service, which he esteemed so important, his gratitude would be eternal, and would know no bounds. Submission was inevitable. I was placed on the top of a heavy coach, which went as far as Englefield Green, and would leave me there. It was close to Bracknell; anybody would tell me the way; I should be there in a moment.

It was a heavy coach indeed, and a wondrous slow one; we tarried in Piccadilly so long, that it seemed as if the prescribed period of absence was to be spent at the White Horse Cellar. But it was not so, however; we stopt at every pothouse on the road, so that it was quite dark, when we reached at last our ultimate destination. It had been a tedious journey, but we have accomplished it at last. So now for Bracknell; it is close at hand; I shall be there in a moment; so now for Bracknell and dinner!

I inquired the way.

"Have you never been there before?"

"Never."

"Then you will not be able to find the way; you must have somebody to go with you. The ostler would go, but he must have five shillings for his trouble."

"Five shillings! It is close at hand."

"It is six long miles off and more."

I thought the fellow augmented the distance in order to augment his pay. However it was a trifle; the man shall have his money; and in truth I began to suspect that in reality Bracknell was not quite so close at hand as my anxious, uxorious friend in his eagerness to despatch me had supposed, or asserted.

"Are you ready, Sir? It is rather a long step, but I will take you the shortest way! Any how it is a long six miles! Where is your luggage?"

"I have none." I could see by the light of the stable lantern, that the good man was disappointed. It would have been more respectable, more satisfactory to himself, more in accordance with strict professional etiquette, more comfortable, to have carried a huge trunk on his shoulder all the way, than to walk empty-handed with a passenger, who had no luggage. Notwithstanding his disappointment, we set out together; it was a dark night, dark as pitch; I never was out in a darker night; the sky was overcast; no traces of sun, or moon, not a star was to be seen. I could not discern any object; I could not see my guide. I followed, as well as I could, the sound of his footsteps, to catch which I listened with painful attention; and when from the nature of the ground they were inaudible, I spoke to him, that the sound of his voice might lead me. I could only advance slowly therefore, and timidly, for I did not know where I might plunge the next step. The distance seemed infinite; sixty times six miles and more. We are on Ascot Heath, he informed me more than once. I have never seen that celebrated spot. I have never set foot on it before, or since. It might have been Christchurch Meadows, Salisbury Plain, the race-course at York, Doncaster, or Epsom, or the Steppes of Tartary, for anything that I could discover. A gay, noisy, busy, crowded scene, swarming with life,

and brilliant with fashion; such was my idea of Ascot Heath, how different did I find the reality from what I imagined, in this and other passages through life. It was a land of darkness, of thick, black darkness, of solitude, stillness, and silence. We met no one, heard no greeting, no voice, no sound; we saw no light, until at last we came to a few scattered lights and to Bracknell. It was my fortune to visit another place of pleasure of even greater celebrity some ten, or twelve, years afterwards, in the midst of darkness not less intense. I would gladly have seen something of the locality of Capua, renowned even to a proverb; I passed through that city twice with the Courier, but on both occasions in the middle of winter and in the middle of the night. It was covered with the same impenetrable veil of thick darkness, which hung over Ascot Heath, but it did not lie hushed in the like silence. I heard a mighty noise in my guarded progress through the vast and impregnable fortress; the raising and lowering of drawbridges; the opening and shutting of gates; the loud, vociferous, and unceasing challenges of the sentinels, and the clattering of the hoofs of our strong escort of light horsemen; for in 1825 robberies were rife, the banditti were going a-head in the south of Italy.

A few scattered lights cheered me; I was at Bracknell. We found the house without difficulty;

the ostler had well earned his five shillings, he received his money cheerfully and civilly. Our approach was noiseless; a neat handmaiden opened the door, and passed me without a word into the sitting-room. If the ghost of Samuel had found his way from Endor, and walking across Ascot Heath, without luggage, had stood before them, the ladies, for all present were ladies, could not have been more amazed. Bysshe was not there; he was absent in London. This was too bad. Who coming on purpose to see him, and by express appointment, could ever expect to find him? But my visit was unlooked for; he had no right to go away; it was not fair! I had breakfasted at eight and slightly, for I was to write all the morning, and to dine, as I supposed, betimes; I had not taken food all day, and it was now late, ten o'clock, or more. Dinner was not to be named: so gross a piece of sensuality was not to be thought of; at least, at that hour. But there was tea, excellent tea; tea in large cups, and in abundance, and thick bread and butter. There were three charming ladies, waiting upon me, like ministering angels, and much charming conversation; what was wanting, then, to make it a perfect paradise? Nothing, surely; heavenly harpings would only have been an interruption!

We sat up frightfully late; they severally expounded the scriptures of life and love, and

elegance; and my heart burnt within me. It really seemed that, after Bysshe his fashion, and like the shepherds of the East, we were to watch all night.

Why we parted; how we got to bed; why the party ever broke up, and are not sitting together in Bracknell at this hour, is a mystery which I could never unravel. Nevertheless, I found myself, somehow or other, in Bysshe's bed-room. His clothes were scattered about; there was much to remind me of him, although I could never forget him; in particular, there were books on all sides; wherever a book could be laid, was an opened book, turned down on it's face to keep his place. It is sweet to sit up late; but it is not sweet to rise late. It was fully eleven o'clock before I was allowed to set my longing eyes on tea and bread and butter for the second time. I had risen in pretty good time, and I tried to still my hunger by dipping into such books as were lying about the room; they were chiefly French.

I did not perceive that much was the matter with the interesting invalid, nor did she profess to be seriously indisposed. In the course of the day a walk was proposed to me. It was my first visit to Bracknell; I ought to see something of the neighbourhood, it was pleasant. I assented: the invalid would attend me; she would show me High Elms, where Shelley had resided, and much besides.

Upon this offer a veto was authoritatively put on the instant. The whole constitution was so terribly shattered, the nerves were in such a debilitated state, that to go out of doors would be an act of madness, of suicide. The inhibition was submitted to with an ill grace; if the sympathy engendered by imputed sickness was agreeable, the restraints which it brought with it were not so. There was a youth with us, who had been educated abroad, in France; he was extremely polite, and sadly to seek; the common result of such an education. He alone was to accompany me, the third party being under injunction to stay at home.

"Never mind," said the fair sufferer, somewhat contumaciously, as we sallied forth, "I shall soon return to London, and then we will have a good long walk together in Kensington Gardens."

On the hill opposite Bracknell is a village, called Hamstead, or Hampstead; we walked thither. It was pleasant enough, but the Berkshire Hampstead is infinitely inferior to the Hampstead of Middlesex. We called at the house of a spinster of stout maturity; she welcomed us cordially, and began presently to discourse vigorously concerning the Rights of Women. The Frenchman stared, and I was silent; in truth, her flowing and rapid delivery did not allow answer, or interpellation. My juvenile companion pointed out Shelley's house. "Mr. Shelley

is a man of splendid talents and overwhelming eloquence, but he is very eccentric; a most extraordinary being!" He told me several anecdotes, which in themselves and from his mode of relating them were whimsical enough. One in particular, illustrative of the mania for navigation was characteristic. At the bottom of the garden at Bracknell was a ditch, or rivulet, flowing into the Loddon, a tributary stream of the Thames. Pope's Pastoral has made the Loddon, under the name Lodona, a classical stream; the tributary's tributary, the nameless ditch, was not deemed unworthy of the notice of a divine poet. Bysshe went to sea upon it stealthily in one of the washing-tubs of his amiable hostess, rowing, or punting his frail bark with a stick used in washing, until the bottom came out. He then freely took possession of another vessel, until the whole fleet of tubs had suffered shipwreck. When the great and terrible day of washing arrived, when every tub was required to give an account of itself, they had all vanished, and as the too fearless navigator had vanished likewise, it was some time before they discovered what had become of them. And Calypso and her attendant nymphs sighed in vain for a clean shift. The purple vintage of the grape has its own peculiar results, and so has the white vintage of the wash.

At some hour of the day we had dinner; but it

was not much; it was irregular, unpunctual, uncomfortable, inconclusive, according to the ordinary course of proceedings in such matters, which were slightly regarded by this family. In the evening there was the same gallant tea-drinking as before. After a plain, scanty, homely, almost uneatable dinner, good, strong, excellent tea in large breakfast-cups, without stint or limit, restored the balance of power, of trade, and of the constitution. The ladies were never weary of the sweet courtesies of making tea, and of handing it about to us graciously and gracefully; and there was thick bread and butter in abundance, in well filled, well piled, horns of plenty, and thereby chiefly was life sustained. Here extremes met; the simple fare of the poorest old woman, of the starved labourer and his children, through a stern, iron necessity, was the diet, through free will and deliberate choice, of the most refined, elegant, accomplished, intellectual specimens of humanity; of humanity nearly approaching to divinity. A young lady never looks so like an angel, I observed to Bysshe, as when she is handing one a large cup of good strong tea.

"Oh! you wretch," he exclaimed; "what a horridly sensual idea!"

A lovely young creature gave him cup after cup. He was greedily swallowing the nectar, discussing and disputing the while, and trembling with

emotion; and pouring the precious liquor into his bosom, upon his knees, and into his shoes, and spilling it on the carpet. She stood before him; and, when he had emptied his cup, she gently wiped him with a white cambric handkerchief.

"Was I so far wrong, then?" I asked him in a whisper. For once, the philosopher was impatient of the truth, and returned no answer.

In the palace of the daughter of the Sun, Circe; in the cave of Calypso, the Calypso of Telemachus, not of Ulysses; where, to clasp the hands in agony, to sigh profoundly, and to turn up the eyes in passionate anguish, was bliss, after the ordinances of the French school of sentiment, by which Shelley was at that period somewhat caught, his presence seemed indispensable. We greatly needed Bysshe that evening. We sat up late again, had no beauty-sleep; excessively late — half the night. The penalty paid for the indulgence was, rising fearfully late in the morning, or rather daytime, and waiting one's patience out of joint for breakfast. Such were the delights of Shelley's paradise in Bracknell.

The prescribed period of my visit of inspection had expired; my mission was fulfilled; it was incumbent upon me to return and make my report. Monsieur very obligingly conducted me by a pleasant walk upon the road from Bagshot to London.

A coach soon came by, and he politely bowed me up to the roof. I arrived at the house of my friend in time for dinner. I found him calm and contented, and my report was satisfactory,—and so was a good dinner. I had been fed plentifully on sighs and smiles; these stay the stomach, but do not fill it; and after feeding for two days on angels' food, on the celestial manna of refined sentiment, a good dinner, through the force of contrast, had more than usual attraction. It may be true, notwithstanding, as an abstract proposition, that dinner, to be quite pure, ought to be purely a sentiment: if we sit down to table at all, we should sit down, not to eat and drink, but to weep.

Wieland's "Agathon" was the leading classic, the text-book, in that university; the work in which all who would graduate were to be examined, which it was necessary to master in order to obtain a degree, which all who ventured to contend for a prize must take up. "Agathon" was read, not in the original, for the German language was not cultivated or understood by the professors, but as "Histoire d'Agathon," in the French translation of Citizen Pernay. It is in three volumes only, not in four, and contains about three-quarters of the original work. The translator says, in his preface: "Nous avons suivi l'original aussi près que possible; mais nous nous sommes permis d'abréger

quelques chapitres, et de supprimer des longueurs : peut être M. Wieland aurait-il agi de même, s'il avait écrit pour des Français. Le gôut de la nation Allemande est si différent du nôtre, qu'il est possible qu'on nous reproche encore d'avoir conservé des passages, que nous n'avons pas eu le courage de faire disparaître." This book was immediately put into the hands of a neophyte. Shelley devoured it eagerly; he was fascinated with it, indeed. I read it with pleasure in the French version, for it was the first time I had met with it. I have read it twice, at least, with augmented gratification, long afterwards, in the original language. I know not whether it has ever been rendered into English; I never met with an English translation. In omitting the "longueurs," the citizen translator has left out the most valuable portions. I ventured to remark to my charming preceptresses, when they taught on the authority of this work, as well as on their own, that love should be purely a sentiment; that this admirable doctrine was not inculcated throughout the whole of the history. At the commencement, certainly, "Agathon" was rather fast. They answered, that the opening chapters of his tale did Wieland no credit; it would have been far better, on every account, if he had omitted them. The reader ought to attend to the latter books only, and entirely to disregard the commencement. This

may be sage advice, no doubt, but it is not easy for a young man always to bear it in mind, and duly and discreetly to attend to it. Besides, the conclusion of the classical romance would hardly be intelligible to one who had not read the earlier adventures.

The glowing young Platonic poet embraced the elegant and learned fiction with ardour, and accepted it with entire faith, as the testament of Platonic love.

BRACKNELL, *April* 18, 1814.

Do you forgive my silence, for I cannot forgive myself, and yet it has been quite impossible to write. My mind has not been free one hour since you were here; and even now I only send a few words to say, that you must wait for an answer to your letter till I come to town, when I shall have the pleasure of telling you how entirely and unavoidably I have been engaged.

Mrs. N. is wonderfully recovered. Air and exercise, and friendly conversation, are just restoring her good looks. Shelley is again a widower; his beauteous half went to town on Thursday with Miss Westbrook, who is gone to live, I believe, at Southampton.

All here unite in kind remembrance; and I entreat you to excuse this abrupt and hasty scrawl, which does not satisfy my conscience or inclination,

but which is all I can command time for to-day. I will let you know when we arrive in town; in the meanwhile, I am, very sincerely yours,

HARRIET B.

To T. J. H.

A criminal information against Lord Cochrane and three other persons of less note, for what was familiarly called the Stock Exchange Hoax, was the most remarkable of sundry exploits in special pleading that were achieved in our murky den at Gray's Inn. It was performed under the auspices of the Solicitor-General of the day, a deaf man, as deaf as a post, but by no means inconsiderable for legal attainments, and not ungentlemanlike. He evinced extraordinary zeal in the matter. The prosecution was conducted through purely political motives, in order to get rid of a troublesome Member of Parliament — a bold, uncompromising reformer; and under an exaggerated notion of the effects of a conviction for a conspiracy, some antiquated crotchets about the villanous judgment, which it was imagined, might be pronounced against the defendants; and that the spurs, so hardly won by the gallant and patriotic officer, might be hacked off with a cleaver, so that he would thereby be for ever incapacitated from sitting in the House of Commons. A conviction and a severe sentence were

obtained; but in other respects, the prosecution, like all other political persecutions, failed in its principal object. The victim was accounted a martyr for the popular cause; the people, whom he served, stood by him firmly, and a penny subscription paid the fine imposed upon him; and he was a greater favourite with the mob than he had ever been before he was attacked by the Government. However, we performed our part well; the genius of special pleading triumphed over all technical and other difficulties. We did the trick: right or wrong, we did the trick! The defendants could not escape from the net which we spread for them, and in the event threw over them. It was not in vain, that this right hand wrote a thousand times: "The said Charles Random de Berenger, the said John Cawthorne Butt, the said Alexander Cochrane Johnson, and the said Alexander Cochrane, commonly called Lord Cochrane, being such evil disposed persons, as aforesaid." My industrious fellow-pupil declared, if the information had been an indictment, he would certainly have copied it. It was well for him that it was not; he had a fortunate escape. He said, that we were bound to go into court to hear the event of my voluminous draft; and, accordingly, on the day of the trial, we walked to the City together, and entered the crowded court.

Lord Ellenborough had come to Guildhall to get a verdict at all hazards. He was rolling about on the bench like a stormy sea, that seemed somehow to desire to calm itself. His head was tossed up and down as a cockboat in the surf; like the white buoy on the bar amidst the breakers. He was clumsily courteous to the jury, to the defendants, to everybody; roughly bland in an awkward fashion, like a pet bear, and freely rejecting immaterial evidence with conspicuous impartiality. The appearance of the defendants certainly was not prepossessing. The three first-named seemed to be at home, but the noble and gallant admiral was ill at ease; it was quite plain that he did not like to be thus aground, stranded, but heartily wished himself afloat again. As regards Lord Cochrane, at least, it was not a creditable proceeding, I confess, although I drew the information myself; but to discuss the matter here would be inopportune, even if its interest had not long since passed away. On the level floor of the old court of King's Bench it was impossible to hear, or to see, with advantage. The old courts at Guildhall were disgraceful to the administration of justice and to the city of London. To eat and drink and job away their funds, not to erect suitable buildings for public purposes, was in those days esteemed the paramount, the sole duty of a municipal corporation.

I stood in the court for an hour or two, amongst the crowd on the floor, and then withdrew; my fellow-pupil remained. I contrived to gather from the bench that I should leave the affair in very good hands; that my criminal information was pretty safe. In Cheapside I fell in with Shelley: I spoke to him of the trial that was depending. He rarely took an interest in such matters, and he expressed no curiosity as to the result. We walked westward, through Newgate Street. When we reached Skinner Street, he said "I must speak with Godwin; come in, I will not detain you long."

I followed him through the shop, which was the only entrance, and up-stairs. We entered a room on the first floor; it was shaped like a quadrant. In the arc were windows; in one radius a fire-place, and in the other a door, and shelves with many old books. William Godwin was not at home. Bysshe strode about the room, causing the crazy floor of the ill-built, unowned dwelling-house to shake and tremble under his impatient footsteps. He appeared to be displeased at not finding the fountain of Political Justice. "Where is Godwin?" he asked me several times, as if I knew. I did not know, and, to say the truth, I did not care. He continued his uneasy promenade; and I stood reading the names of old English authors on the backs of the venerable volumes, when the door was

partially and softly opened. A thrilling voice called "Shelley!" A thrilling voice answered, "Mary!" And he darted out of the room, like an arrow from the bow of the far-shooting king. A very young female, fair and fair-haired, pale indeed, and with a piercing look, wearing a frock of tartan, an unusual dress in London at that time, had called him out of the room. He was absent a very short time—a minute or two; and then returned. "Godwin is out; there is no use in waiting." So we continued our walk along Holborn.

"Who was that, pray?" I asked; "a daughter?'

"Yes."

"A daughter of William Godwin?"

"The daughter of Godwin and Mary."

This was the first time, on the day of Lord Cochrane's trial, that I beheld a very distinguished lady, of whom I have much to say hereafter. It was but the glance of a moment, through a door partly opened. Her quietness certainly struck me, and possibly also, for I am not quite sure on this point, her paleness and piercing look. Nothing more was said on either side about the young female. "Do you think he loved her?" First impressions are indelible; and in them alone are the truth and reality of things for the most part to be found. Truth lives at the bottom of a well; perhaps, rather, at the fountain head. It may be

well, therefore, to trace my earliest impressions on this subject to their source. I spent five or six years of my boyhood at a public school in an old cathedral city. The young flock, of which I was a member, and eventually the captain, were styled by ourselves, and designated universally by others, "The Grammar Boys." In the German universities, all who are not students, youths, or otherwise matriculated in the university, are termed Philistines. For all other lads in the town, be they who they might, we had a still less courteous appellation; they were known to us only as "the Blackguards." Of their existence our fists might be accounted the final cause; they had been created solely that they might be licked by us, whenever an opportunity and a pretence offered; consequently, they had the discretion to keep out of the way of the Grammar Boys as much as possible.

The ecclesiastical corporation was wealthy; one of the richest. There were bishops, and deans, and prebendaries, and archdeacons in plenty; but these, our court and trump cards, were only turned up occasionally. They came to the audits, and to be handsomely paid for feasting sumptuously, and entertaining hospitably during a residence of three weeks a-piece in every year; in a word, the grandees only came when something was to be gotten. The constant quantities were stars of a lesser magnitude;

and they, like the poor, were always with us. Precentors, sacristans, librarians, minor canons, vicars choral, choristers, organists; in short, the whole staff of a cathedral of the first class, and many parochial clergy, who held livings in the city, or the neighbourhood, small benefices, and, for the most part, the options of the minor canons. The higher ecclesiastics were not deficient in hospitality and attention to those boys with whom they were acquainted, and a slight acquaintance sufficed; but their visits were few and far between, as the visits of angels.

The roast pigs, the roast geese, the roast hares; the loins of veal and hams; the overflowing dishes of green peas, asparagus, and new potatoes; the well-sugared, juicy, fruit-pies, with their attendant custards; plum-pudding with its brandy-sauce,—according to the vicissitudes of the seasons,—were set out on Sundays punctually at two o'clock on the boards of the poorer clergy, to cheer their famished families and friends: so copious and nutritious was the milk of the dun cow! How many a genial Sunday dinner did the hungry grammar boy share with these humble, apostolical men; to look back upon their simple, but succulent fare, through the long vista of half a century, is almost as satisfying as a full meal. Why, in God's name, and in the name of our holy religion, did they sacrilegiously

plunder those venerable institutions, and suppress or diminish them, instead of restoring them to their pristine efficiency, by enforcing residence, exorcizing the demons of pluralities, jobbing, and nepotism.

In a cathedral, the precentor is the genius of the place, the coryphæus of the choir. He appoints the musical services, chooses the anthem, and sings aloud the first verse of the Psalms as a quick chaunt in D minor, or a slow measure in any other key he may please to select; and it is worse than sacrilege to swerve half a tone from his irresponsible guidance. The mighty organ itself, with its ten thousand tongues, and infinitely varying voices, dares to speak only as he bids it. A huge cauliflower wig, well whitened, surmounted by a portentous shovel hat, is a crown of glory to the aged, the spectacles being of a like majesty, vast pebbles in ponderous silver frames, glittering like the lamps of a carriage. An ample black coat, with large buttons, a lapelled waistcoat, black shorts, square-toed shoes, bright silver buckles on the instep and at the knee, and a gold-headed cane of a solid structure, are the proper accompaniments and consolations of our declining years. The externals of old age have been given up, and with them all due reverence. Now-a-days an old man must needs dress himself like a boy, in order that he may look like an old fool, and be treated as one.

By the worthy pastor, who imprinted my name upon my forehead at the baptismal font, I was furnished with an introduction to the estimable precentor. I took the letter to his house. An old housekeeper, whose dress harmonized with the costume of her master, came to the door. She wore a flowered gown of chintz, radiant with colossal flowers of the brightest hues; such as I have subsequently seen Dutch matrons wearing in Holland. "Master is not at home; but the girls are, they will be glad to see you. Pray walk in!" That was well. The precentor might have inquired after the supine of some Latin verb; or have required the præteritum perfectum passivum of a Greek barytone; with the girls there could be nothing worse than battledore and shuttlecock, more puzzling than hide and seek. The reverend leader of the choir had no son living, but he was blessed with three daughters. To them I was ushered in, to the tall, gaunt, bony, pale-eyed virgins of forty or fifty summers. The worthy housekeeper had known them ever since they were born, before indeed, and she persisted steadfastly in calling them "the girls," in spite of Time himself. They were Blues and more, learned ladies; so learned, that it makes the head ache, even now, to think how learned they were.

"Take a seat. Could Homer write? Wolfius, in

his Prologomena, says he could not. What do you say, sir?"

"I do not know; but our vicar can, and here is his letter of introduction."

It was a come off, but it would not do. The letter was laid unopened upon a desk. I must pass my examination. It seemed as if I was sitting for the gold-medal, and had three examining masters upon me at once, so mercilessly did they pluck me. I heard then, for the first time, what I have often heard since, that Herodotus was the father of history; and I heard much besides,—some things, I believe, that I never heard before or since. I was invited to dine next Sunday. The precentor was a merry, good-natured old man, and without exception, the best and happiest punster I ever met with; and what was still better, he had made over, without any reservation, all his learning to his daughters.

To call in the course of the week, after dining on Sunday, was the rule. "They are out, except the youngest of the girls, Miss Debby; you can go into her." Miss Deborah was sitting by herself with a small volume in her hand; she laid it down open on the table. "Did he love her? Do you think he loved her?" That was a poser! It was the stiffest question they ever put. When they confined themselves to the ancient world, I could give some sort of a guess answer; but when they de-

scended to modern literature, which they condescended to read, and it was a great condescension, I was quite lost. She put the book into my hand —Godwin's "Memoirs of Mary;" a work, which at that time was a novelty, at least in a provincial town. "Of course, you have read this?" Of course, I had not. I had never even heard of William Godwin, or Mary Wollstonecraft: how should I? She read several passages aloud to me, and concluded with the question, "Did he love her? Do you think he loved her?"

I looked at her beseechingly, and would have said: "Ask me anything you like about τύπτω. I am pretty strong in the verbs; and I can make you a Greek tree; but I am a novice in love!" She was moved by my supplicating looks, and so the kind creature let me go. When I saw, for the first time, the daughter of the little book, with whose birth it concludes; of the little book that had scared me so cruelly; how vividly did the sight of her recall my adventure with "the girl" Deborah! "I could not answer your question then, dearest Debby, being only in my thirteenth year; but I can now. If you meant to ask, as I have no doubt you did, whether there is any peculiar advantage in the new philosophy of love, I can assure you, confidently, my good girl, that there is none whatever."

Let us take one more peep at Field Place; one

more only, and it will be the last, for it was Bysshe's last visit to his paternal hearth and native home. In the beginning of the summer of 1814, he walked one day alone from Bracknell to Horsham. A long and a pleasant walk, I should imagine. He was in an excited state, and had revelations by the way, and saw celestial visions, of which more hereafter.

A young officer in a marching regiment had been quartered some little time at Horsham; he met with hospitality and kindness, as others did, at Field Place. He assisted at the brief return of the prodigal son; he was present at the last visit, and he has given us a written account of it, from which I will extract such particulars as are interesting. It is strangely interlarded with laudations of his benefactors; such rapturous gratitude is creditable to his feelings; but in mercy to all persons concerned, it is expedient to omit his demonstrations of it. One may infer from the tune and temper of Bysshe's last letter to myself, that his family might have had him then on reasonable, on easy terms, had they known how to negotiate a treaty of peace. They might probably have lured the wild hawk, the peregrine falcon, back to his perch without difficulty. Possibly they did not know it; certainly they did not know how to set about it; and the young wanderer was reserved for other, and for higher and more important destinies:

man proposes, but man seldom disposes. It is a strange and a sad picture of the fruits of stubborn, intractable, wrong-headed violence to contemplate his mother and sisters timidly entertaining for the last time the divine poet disguised as a soldier. The friendly reception of the young officer at Field Place is related, and the narrative proceeds thus.

"At this time I had not seen Shelley, but the servants, especially the old butler, Laker, had spoken of him to me. He seemed to have won the heartsof the whole household. Mrs. Shelley often spoke to me of her son; her heart yearned after him with all the fondness of a mother's love. It was during the absence of his father and the three youngest children, that the natural desire of a mother to see her son induced her to propose that he should pay her a short visit. At this time he resided somewhere in the country with his first wife and their only child, Ianthe. He walked from his house, until within a very few miles of Field Place, when a farmer gave him a seat in his travelling cart. As he passed along the farmer, ignorant of the quality of his companion, amused Bysshe with descriptions of the country and its inhabitants. When Field Place came in sight, he told whose seat it was; and as the most remarkable incident connected with the family, that young Master Shelley seldom went to church. The poor fellow arrived at Field Place

exceedingly fatigued. I came there the following morning to meet him. I found him with his mother and his two elder sisters in a small room off the drawing-room, which they had named Confusion Hall. He received me with frankness and kindliness, as if he had known me from childhood, and at once won my heart. I fancy I see him now, as he sat by the window, and hear his voice, the tones of which impressed me with his sincerity and simplicity. His resemblance to his sister, Elizabeth, was as striking as if they had been twins. His eyes were most expressive, his complexion beautifully fair; his features exquisitely fine; his hair was dark, and no peculiar attention to its arrangement was manifest. In person he was slender and gentleman-like, but inclined to stoop; his gait was decidedly not military. The general appearance indicated great delicacy of constitution. One would at once pronounce of him, that he was something different from other men. There was an earnestness in his manner, and such perfect gentleness of breeding and freedom from everything artificial as charmed every one. I never met a man who so immediately won upon me. The generosity of his disposition and utter unselfishness imposed upon him the necessity of strict self-denial in personal comforts. Consequently he was obliged to be most economical in his dress. He one day asked us,

how we liked his coat, the only one he had brought with him. We said it was very nice, it looked as if new. Well, said he, it is an old black coat, which I have had done up, and smartened with metal buttons and a velvet collar. As it was not desirable that Bysshe's presence in the country should be known, we arranged that on walking out he should wear my scarlet uniform, and that I should assume his outer garments. So he donned the soldier's dress, and sallied forth. His head was so remarkably small, that though mine be not large, the cap came down over his eyes, the peak resting on his nose, and it had to be stuffed before it would fit him. His hat just stuck on the crown of my head. He certainly looked like anything but a soldier.

"The metamorphosis was very amusing; he enjoyed it much, and made himself perfectly at home in his unwonted garb. We gave him the name of Captain Jones, under which name we used to talk of him after his departure; but, with all our care, Bysshe's visit could not be kept a secret. I chanced to mention the name of Sir James Mackintosh, of whom he expressed the highest admiration. He told me Sir James was intimate with one to whom, as he said, he owed everything; from whose book, Political Justice, he had derived all that was valuable in knowledge and virtue. He discoursed with eloquence and enthusiasm; but his views

seemed to me exquisitely metaphysical, and by no means clear, precise, or decided. He told me he had already read the Bible in Hebrew four times. He was then only twenty-two years of age. Shelley never learnt Hebrew; he probably said, in Greek, for he was much addicted to reading the Septuagint. He spoke of the Supreme Being as of infinite mercy and benevolence. He disclosed no fixed views of spiritual things; all seemed wild and fanciful. He said, that he once thought the surrounding atmosphere was peopled with the spirits of the departed. He reasoned and spoke as a perfect gentleman, and treated my arguments, boy as I was,—I had lately completed my sixteenth year,—with as much consideration and respect as if I had been his equal in ability and attainments. Shelley was one of the most sensitive of human beings; he had a horror of taking life, and looked upon it as a crime. He read poetry with great emphasis and solemnity: one evening, he read aloud to us a translation of one of Goethe's poems, and at this day I think I hear him. In music he seemed to delight, as a medium of association: the tunes which had been favourites in boyhood charmed him. There was one, which he played several times on the piano with one hand, that seemed to absorb him; it was an exceedingly simple air, which, I understand, his earliest love

was wont to play for him. Poor fellow! He soon left us, and I never saw him afterwards, but I can never forget him. It was his last visit to Field Place. He was an amiable, gentle being."

TORQUAY, *Feb.* 16, 1857.

MY DEAR H.,

It is very difficult, after so long a time, to remember with accuracy events which occurred so long ago. The first time I ever saw Bysshe was when I was at Harrow. I was nine years old; my brother George, ten. We took him up at Brentford, where he was at school, at Dr. Greenlaw's; a servant of my father's taking care of us all. He accompanied us to Ferne, and spent the Easter holidays there. The only circumstance I can recollect in connection with that visit was, that Bysshe, who was some few years older than we were, thought it would be good service to play carpenters, and, under his auspices, we got the carpenters' axes, and cut down some of my father's young fir-trees in the park. My father often used to remind me of that circumstance.

I did not meet Bysshe again after that till I was fifteen, the year I left the navy, and then I went to Field Place with my father, mother, Charlotte, and Harriet. Bysshe was there, having just left Eton, and his sister, Elizabeth. Bysshe was at that time

more attached to my sister Harriet than I can express, and I recollect well the moonlight walks we four had at Strode, and also at St. Irving's; that, I think, was the name of the place, then the Duke of Norfolk's, at Horsham. (St. Irving's Hills, a beautiful place, on the right hand side as you go from Horsham to Field Place, laid out by the famous Capability Brown, and full of magnificent forest-trees, waterfalls, and rustic seats. The house was Elizabethan. All has been destroyed.) That was in the year 1810. After our visit at Field Place, we went to my brother's house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where Bysshe, his mother, and Elizabeth joined us, and a very happy month we spent. Bysshe was full of life and spirits, and very well pleased with his successful devotion to my sister. In the course of that summer, to the best of my recollection, after we had retired into Wiltshire, a continual correspondence was going on, as, I believe, there had been before, between Bysshe and my sister Harriet. But she became uneasy at the tone of his letters on speculative subjects, at first consulting my mother, and subsequently my father also on the subject. This led at last, though I cannot exactly tell how, to the dissolution of an engagement between Bysshe and my sister, which had previously been permitted, both by his father and mine.

In the autumn of 1810 Bysshe went to Oxford, to reside at University College, where he became acquainted with Mr. Hogg, and formed an intimate friendship with him. He found in him a kindred spirit as to his studies and speculations on various subjects, and it was not long ere Bysshe began to write on these. During the Christmas vacation of that year, and in January, 1811, I spent part of it with Bysshe at Field Place, and when we returned to London, his sister Mary sent a letter of introduction with a present to her schoolfellow, Miss Westbrook, which Bysshe and I were to take to her. I recollect we did so, calling at Mr. Westbrook's house. I scarcely know how it came about, but from that time Bysshe corresponded with Miss Westbrook. And not long after, for it was very soon after the Lent term had commenced, a little controversial work was published at Oxford. The pamphlet had not the author's name, but it was suspected in the University who was the author; and the young friends were dismissed from Oxford, for contumaciously refusing to deny themselves to be the authors of the work.

Bysshe and his friend then came to London, his father at that time refusing to receive Bysshe at Field Place. He came, therefore, to my brother's house in Lincoln's-inn Fields. I was then in town, attending Mr. Abernethy's anatomical lectures.

The thought of anatomy, especially after a few conversations with my brother, became quite delightful to Bysshe, and he attended a course with me, and sometimes went also to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. At that time Bysshe and his friend took a lodging in Poland-street, where they continued for some time; I think, a great part of the spring, and I spent a part of every day with them. No particular incident occurred at the time; at least I do not recollect any. They both, but especially Bysshe, were occupied all the mornings in writing; and after the anatomical lecture, we used sometimes to walk in St. James's Park, where Bysshe used to express his dislike of soldiers; objecting to a standing army, as being calculated to fetter the minds of the people.

In the course of the spring, when his father was attending Parliament, an effort was made by the Duke of Norfolk to persuade my cousin to become a politician, under his auspices. By the Duke's invitation Bysshe met his father, at dinner at Norfolk House, to talk over a plan for bringing him in as member for Horsham, and to induce him to exercise his talents in the pursuit of politics. I recollect the indignation Bysshe expressed after that dinner, at what he considered an effort made to shackle his mind, and introduce him into life as a mere follower of the Duke. His father was puzzled what to do when that plan failed.

In the meantime, my brother Thomas, and his first wife, a very nice person, came to town for a few weeks, and became acquainted with Bysshe. He had heard much of Cwm Elan, in Radnorshire (at that time belonging to my brother, but since sold), from my sister, Harriet, and wishing much to see the place, he received an invitation from my brother Tom and his wife to go there that summer, which he did. Whilst on the visit, his continued correspondence with Miss W. led to his return to London, and subsequent elopement with her. He corresponded with me also, during this period, and wrote me a letter concerning what he termed, his summons to link his fate with another, closing his communication thus: "Hear it not, Percy, for it is a knell, which summons thee to heaven or to hell!" I sometimes think I have that letter locked up at S. If I go there in the summer, and find it, I will send it to you.

When Bysshe finally came to town to elope with Miss W., he came, as usual, to Lincoln's-inn Fields, and I was his companion on his visits to her, and finally accompanied them early one morning,—I forget now the month, or the date, but it might have been September,—in a hackney-coach to the Green Dragon, in Gracechurch-street, where we remained all day, till the hour when the mail-coaches start, when they departed in the northern

mail for York. The following spring I saw Bysshe and Mrs. Shelley in London. They spent the summer of that year, 1812, with my brother and sister at Cwm Elan. Mrs. G. was very much pleased with Mrs. Shelley, and sorry when they left them. They intended at that time to settle in Wales, but I think they went to the Lakes instead, Bysshe having become acquainted with Southey. From that time I never saw Bysshe again. My brother may have seen something of him, either in town, or in Edinburgh, but I do not quite recollect how that was.

I am afraid I have not been able to remember anything of Bysshe's early life that will prove of use. Though I spent many an afternoon and evening with Bysshe and Mr. H., at almost every coffeehouse in London, for they changed their dining place daily for the sake of variety, I cannot recapitulate the conversations, though vividly recollecting the scenes. Believe me, my dear H.,

Your affectionate cousin,

C. H. G.

To H. S.

Torquay, *Feb.* 25, 1857.

My Dear H.,

I am indeed glad to hear of the favourable reception given to my few early recollections of Bysshe. I remember on the occasion of our going

to the Duke of Norfolk's house, Hills, at Horsham, Bysshe's putting on a working man's dress, and coming to my sister as a beggar, and also his taking up one of those very little chests of drawers, peculiar to old houses, such as Hills was, and carrying it off part of the way back to Field Place; and Elizabeth's being in a state of consternation lest her father should meet with us. But Bysshe had the power of entering so thoroughly into the spirit of his own humour, that nothing could stop him when once his spirits were up, and he carried you along with him in his hilarious flight, and made you a sharer in his mirth, in a manner quite irresistible.

During my intercourse with Bysshe, this was his one happy year. I never saw him after that, but with some care on his mind. I forgot to mention before, that during the early part of the summer which Bysshe spent in town, after leaving Oxford, the Prince Regent gave a splendid fête at Carlton House, in which the novelty was introduced of a stream of water, in imitation of a river, meandering down the middle of a very long table, in a temporary tent erected in Carlton Gardens. This was much commented upon in the papers, and laughed at by the Opposition. Bysshe also was of the number of those who disapproved of the fête and its accompaniments. He wrote a poem on the subject of about fifty lines, which he published immediately, wherein

he apostrophized the Prince as sitting on the bank of his tiny river; and he amused himself with throwing copies into the carriages of persons going to Carlton House after the fête.

Believe me, &c.

C. H. G.

To H. S.

WARNHAM CHURCH.

END OF VOL. II.

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